

Div.

22.11.18

The University of Chicago
Libraries



WHAT JESUS SAID
TALKS TO BOYS AND GIRLS

WHAT JESUS SAID

TALKS TO BOYS AND GIRLS

By

WILL REASON, M.A.

Author of

"Ten Minute Talks to Boys and Girls"

SECOND EDITION

LONDON: ROBERT SCOTT
ROXBURGHE HOUSE
PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

NEW YORK: GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

MCMXIV

All rights reserved.

THE
TO
YRABRU OQADIND

BV4315
.R28

First Edition *September, 1913.*

Second Impression *January, 1914.*

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I	
GROWING UP AND GROWING DOWN	9
<p>"Except ye turn and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."— Matt. xviii. 3.</p>	
II	
THE YOKE THAT FITS	17
<p>"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me ; for I am meek and lowly of heart : and ye shall find rest unto your souls."—Matt. xi, 28 and 29.</p>	
III	
LEARNING HAPPINESS	24
<p>"Blessed are . . ."—Matt. v.</p>	
IV	
WITH GOD AS KING	31
<p>"Blessed are the poor in spirit : for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."—Matt. v. 3.</p>	
V	
THE TRUE LANDLORDS	39
<p>"Blessed are the meek : for they shall inherit the earth."— Matt. v. 5.</p>	
VI	
THE ROCKS IN THE ROAD	46
<p>"Blessed are they that mourn : for they shall be com- forted."—Matt. v. 4.</p>	

	PAGE
VII	
THE BEST SAUCE	53
<p style="text-align: center;">"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness : for they shall be filled."—Matt. v. 6.</p>	
VIII	
EYESIGHT AND HEART-SIGHT	61
<p style="text-align: center;">"Blessed are the pure in heart : for they shall see God."—Matt. v. 8.</p>	
IX	
BOOMERANGS	68
<p style="text-align: center;">"Blessed are the merciful : for they shall obtain mercy."—Matt. v. 7.</p>	
X	
THE ORDER OF THE SONS OF GOD	76
<p style="text-align: center;">"Blessed are the peacemakers : for they shall be called SONS OF GOD."—Matt. v. 9.</p>	
XI	
BULLIES AND MARTYRS	84
<p style="text-align: center;">"Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake : for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. . . . Rejoice, and be exceeding glad."—Matt. v. 10 and 12.</p>	
XII	
FINE CLOTHES	91
<p style="text-align: center;">"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow."—Matt. v. 28.</p>	
XIII	
THE SWORD OF BRENNUS	99
<p style="text-align: center;">"With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged ; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you."—Matt. vii. 2.</p>	

CONTENTS

7

PAGE

XIV

APRIL FOOLS 107

"Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ;
knock, and it shall be opened unto you."—Matt. vii. 7.

XV

THE GOLDEN RULE 115

"All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men
should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them :
for this is the law and the prophets."—Matt. vii. 12.

XVI

THE GATE AND THE PATH 123

"Enter ye in by the narrow gate : for wide is the gate,
and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction,
and many be they that enter in thereby. For narrow
is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto
life, and few be they that find it."—Matt. vii. 13 and 14.

XVII

THE TWO TREES 131

"Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit."—Matt.
vii. 17.

XVIII

THE MAID WHO BARRED THE DOOR 138

"He that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much."
—Luke xvi. 10.

XIX

THE SCHOOLBOY'S LETTER 146

"There is nothing covered up that shall not be revealed ;
and hid, that shall not be known."—Luke xii. 2.

XX

THE BEAN THAT WAS NOT SOWN 154

"Whosoever would save his life shall lose it ; and whoso-
ever shall lose his life for My sake shall find it."—
Matt. xvi. 25.

XXI

THE WINDMILL AND THE JAR 162

"What doth it profit a man, to gain the whole world
and forfeit his life?"—Mark viii. 36.

XXII

THE WASP AND THE SPIDER 169

"If ye abide in My word, . . . ye shall know the truth,
and the truth shall make you free."—John viii. 31.

XXIII

DOORS AND WINDOWS 177

"I am the Door; by Me if any man enter in, he shall go
in and go out and find pasture."—John x. 9.

XXIV

FOR JESUS' SAKE 184

"That whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My Name,
He may give it you."—John xv. 16.

WHAT JESUS SAID

I

GROWING UP AND GROWING DOWN

“Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.”
—MATT. xviii. 3.

SOME boys and girls are in a great hurry to grow up. They think that men and women have a much better time than they do themselves, so they want the years to go quickly. The boys feel their upper lips for the moustaches that are so slow in coming, and the girls practise putting up their back hair—when no one is looking.

Of course you really are intended to grow up, and there are things waiting for you to do as men and women which you cannot do as boys and girls. Nothing that is alive can stay just as it is always. But suppose as the time goes on you do not really grow up, but *grow down* instead? You do not know what I mean?

There is a lively little creature that swims about in the sea. It is not very much unlike the tadpole of a frog, which I expect you have often seen. It has a tail and a head, something like a backbone, a little brain and a kind of an eye. To look at it you would expect that soon it would become quite a respectable animal, perhaps with legs like the frog, perhaps with fins like a fish, but at any rate that its brain would grow and it would be more able to do things. But it does nothing of the kind. As time goes on it loses its tail, its eye, its backbone, and its brain, and becomes just a thick kind of sack. You can find these things on the seashore sometimes. When you touch them, they squirt out water, and that seems all that they can do, so they are called sea-squirts. That is what I mean by growing down instead of growing up.

There are other creatures that change for the worse in the same way. The barnacles that are found growing on stalks something like Brussels sprouts on the bottoms of ships that have been long at sea and on other places, were once also lively little creatures that could swim about quite nicely. When they grow old they are more like vegetables than animals. I think we may

GROWING UP AND GROWING DOWN 11

take this as a warning that growing old may be losing a good deal of life, if we are not careful.

So Jesus says that to get into the Kingdom of Heaven, which means to have our lives ordered in the power and beauty of God Himself, what is generally needed is not so much the change of boys and girls into men and women as the change of men and women into little children.

Don't let this make you conceited, as if you were necessarily so much better than the grown-up people. If it does, it will only show that you have already grown out of being truly *childlike* and need the great change yourself. For conceit and pride hurry you away from the Kingdom of God faster than almost anything else.

It is not the number of years you have been in the world that matters. It is what you are in yourself. Time goes on whatever we do, and every year we reckon a greater number of birthdays. If all you can say is that you have only had a few birthdays, it does not mean much. Unless you take care you will be just like most other men and women, when twenty or thirty years or more have gone by.

The best thing is to ask what it is that

children lose as they get older ; what it is that makes us belong to God's Kingdom. Perhaps then you will be able to keep it, even when you are forty or fifty or any number of years of age.

I think that one great thing about it is just that little children do grow. That is one of the things that make it really a child. If it stopped growing we should say it was a child no longer. So Jesus does not want you always to be small enough to wear short skirts or knickerbocker suits.

Of course there comes a time when it is convenient that the body would stop growing big ; it would be very awkward always to be growing out of our clothes. That gives mother quite trouble enough as it is. But mere size does not make us better or more alive, any more than the number of years we have been in the world. So we do not need to have the body always getting bigger.

But you yourself ought to be growing more alive all the time, and that is just what Jesus found the grown-up people had forgotten. Many people, when they leave school, think they need not bother about learning any more. And, what is more unfortunate still, very many do not trouble

to get any wiser, or any truer, or any more able to love. They get fixed and set in all their ways.

True children keep on growing. That is the first thing to remember. You must always be teachable, always be ready to grow into something better than you have yet become. That is the great hope of childhood, that God can work His beautiful will in it still. Sometimes all He can do with people that have lost this teachableness is to break them up in some way. Anyhow, before they can hope to enter His Kingdom, they have to be made over again into little children.

Unless they do get this power of change for the better, it would be no good making them only ten years old. It used to be said that somewhere there was a mill that ground people young again, and an old woman set off to find it. This took a long time, for most of the people she asked did not know where it was, and I do not suppose that if any one asked you, you could tell the way.

But at last she found it, and asked those in charge if she might be ground into a little girl once more. "Oh yes!" they said, "but there is an agreement you will have to sign." That seemed only fair, and she

was ready to do almost anything to get back her rosy cheeks, her bright eyes, her beautiful head of hair, and a body that did not get so dreadfully tired. So the keeper went into the mill and brought out the paper for her to see. When she had read it, she gave it back again, and said, "No, thank you. I do not want to be a little girl again on those conditions." Can you guess what they were? She would have agreed to make all the same mistakes and to do all the same bad things that she had already done in her life. That took away all the hope of growing better, and it was not worth while.

What God wants is that we should keep growing more alive, and it was a wise man who said, "We live by admiration, hope and love." A little child can always admire wonderful things, but I know some boys and girls even who think it is a mark of growing up never to show admiration for anything. They are growing down. The wisest men, who really have found out more things than most of us can learn from them, have said that they were "like children picking up shells on the seashore." They meant that beyond them was a whole ocean of wonderful knowledge they had not begun to explore.

GROWING UP AND GROWING DOWN 15

A true child is always hopeful, and I could say much about that. But the last is the best of all. A little child can love. One of the most dreadful things is when men and women lose this power. Mr. Hawthorne tells a story of a feast that was spread at Christmas-time, to which only very unfortunate people were admitted. He saw widows who had lost their husbands ; cripples who had lost their limbs ; all sorts of people who were evidently very poor or wretched in some way. But what he could not understand was that there was a very well-dressed man there, with all his limbs, not at all old in years, and altogether looking very well off indeed. " Why is this man allowed to come to the feast for the miserable and wretched ? " he asked. Then they told him that he had lost his heart, and was not able to love any one. He was the most unfortunate and miserable of all.

Grow up, boys and girls, by all means. Jesus grew in height and in years, but He grew in grace and in wisdom too. Always He kept the heart of a little child. You see, He was always obedient. After He grew too wise for Joseph and Mary to be able to tell Him what to do, He kept on doing what His Father in heaven gave Him

to do. That is how we can keep young ourselves. Some day you will grow up so that you will not need to obey your teacher at school, or even your father and mother, but you can always remain an obedient child of God.

II

THE YOKE THAT FITS

“Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly of heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”—MATT. xi. 28.

Do you notice the faces of people as you walk along the street? If so, you will have seen how many of them look tired and anxious, with lines in their faces that have come to stay. Jesus knew that, and gave them this beautiful invitation to come and get rest.

Perhaps you think that it does not concern you much, because you are not among the tired folk. In fact, you are so full of life and energy that it is a great trouble to keep still when you are told to do so. You do not want to rest, but to run and jump and shout, and it is very tiresome when the grown-up people want you to be quiet. I hope that is so, for it means that you are healthy. But would it not be a good thing

to know beforehand how not to get tired as you grow older? Then perhaps those weary lines would never come into your face.

But surely boys and girls do find themselves heavy-laden sometimes. I know that one of your hymns says—

“Little feet are never weary,
Little hearts are seldom sad,”

but that is not quite so true as we would like it to be. There are times when you have something hard and bothersome to do; the sunshine dies out of your face and the clouds come over it. Then you think life is not worth living—for a little while.

Some people think that the easiest way of getting rid of burdens is to leave them alone, or to put them on somebody else. Most of us cannot do that; we have to carry the burden and do the work somehow. Even those who succeed in making others do it get burdens of their own in other ways. The weariest people I know are those who have nothing to do. Life itself is a burden to them; they do not know what to do with it. The children who whine that they have nothing to do seem to be pretty unhappy, do they not?

No! Jesus believed in work; it is the

right thing and the happiest thing, when done in the right way. Once He said that God worked and so did He. The rest He spoke of was not in stopping, though it is not surprising that some people think it must be, for they are made to do far too much. One of these, a poor woman who never seemed to have a minute to herself, had this put on her tombstone when she died—

“I am going to do nothing for ever and ever.”

I am quite sure God would give her all the doing nothing that she needed for a while, but I am also sure that she would get tired of it before the “for ever and ever” had really begun.

The trouble is not in working but in getting tired. An old friend said to me once that the most perfect instance of rest was a pegtop spinning its fastest. Next time you get a good spin on your top, just notice how perfect the balance is; it looks almost motionless as it stands upright, apparently without effort. But when it loses its power it begins to wobble and falter.

Watch the people who know how to do things. They seem to do them in the easiest way, but it is because all their power

is well directed. Those who do not know make a tremendous fuss, and look as if they were enormously energetic, but nothing much is done.

Once there was a factory in which a very important machine could not be made to work. It groaned and creaked, and kept breaking down. At last the owners asked a very clever engineer to come and put it right for them. He came and looked at it, made an alteration here and another there, and in a very short time the machine was running smoothly and doing its work powerfully. Then they asked how much there was to pay, and he named a big sum of money. "What!" they said, "all that for a few minutes' work?" "No," he answered, "but for many years spent in learning how to do it."

Now Jesus has this valuable secret. How much it cost Him I do not know, but He is ready to give it to us quite freely. You notice that He says, "Take My yoke upon you." The yoke was used for oxen in ploughing, but probably you have never seen one, as we do not generally plough that way now. But I have seen them. The yoke is made of wood, and fits over the shoulders of the two oxen, so

that they can most readily pull together and put all their weight into the pull at the right place. Very likely Jesus had made yokes when He worked in the carpenter's shop, and knew how important it was that they should fit properly.

So it means that Jesus has a way, which He will teach us, of carrying the burdens of life, the difficult and tiresome things, well and easily. That is worth a great deal, isn't it? Are you ready to learn it? It will take you some time, but that is all the more reason for beginning now. One of those Irishmen who have so ready a wit once ran hard to catch a train, but lost it. Some one said to him, "Ah, Pat, you did not run fast enough!" "Oh yes, I did," he answered, "but I did not start soon enough." Starting soon enough is half the battle, and I think it is part of the secret of Jesus. I have noticed that children who have difficult tasks to do very often waste a great deal of time in grumbling about what a lot there is to do, and so they make the time less still.

But what did Jesus mean by saying, "For I am meek and lowly of heart"?

That you will only learn by becoming meek and lowly yourself. But this much you can see at once. Almost all the trouble and the

worry come from the way in which we take things, not from the work itself that has to be done. In Dickens's *David Copperfield* he tells of an old woman called Mrs. Gummidge, who always took everything that went at all wrong as an injury to herself. When the porridge was burnt, everybody was sorry, but Mrs. Gummidge felt it the worst. She called herself "a poor lone creature," but that was exactly where she was *not* meek and lowly. Those who are really so do not think about themselves.

That wet day, for instance, when the rain stopped the picnic we had planned, was very hard to bear, was it not? You fretted and fumed, and felt yourself injured; very likely you said it was "a shame!" Suppose, instead of grizzling about what you felt like, you had thought about other people, and how they might after all spend a happy day. There are really plenty of pleasant things to do when it is wet; you have often done them before. If you had tried to make your brothers and sisters happy in doing some of these things, and remembered how much easier it would be for your mother if you were happily occupied instead of lounging round the house in a bad temper, you would have been surprised how readily

you would have got over your own disappointment.

It is the rest *in your souls* that Jesus gives you in this way, and that is far better than having things outside easy.

“Oh! it is all very well for you to talk,” you say. Yes, I know, it *is* much easier to talk about it than to do it. But suppose you try the doing, instead of talking yourself? Other people have found that Jesus’ way really does make things easier, so why shouldn’t you? If you find it hard to begin, remember that Jesus says, “Come unto Me.” Go to Him and ask Him to help, and you will find that He does.

III

LEARNING HAPPINESS

“Blessed are . . .”—MATT. v.

IF you were asked whether you wanted to be happy, it would strike you as quite an unnecessary question, would it not? Of course every one wants to be happy. All the really good stories, no matter how many giants have to be killed first, end with “So they lived happily ever after.”

But somehow, though we all wish to be happy, it so often happens that we are not. We do not seem to be able to manage it for long together. Something goes wrong, or some one is tiresome, or even when we get the things we planned we do not enjoy them somehow. How often have you been really happy for a whole long day together?

Some boys and girls think that when they grow up and do not have to stop doing what they like to go to bed or to run an errand because some one says they must, they

will have a really good time. But those who have grown up do not find it so.

In fact, happiness is so often followed by disagreeable things that people used to think that the gods they believed in were jealous of any one who was too happy, and sent troubles to stop it. There is told a story of a king long ago with whom everything went well. He was very rich; he won all the fights he had to make, and was fortunate in all that he did. This made his friends very nervous about him, and they advised him to avoid the trouble that was bound to come by getting rid of something he valued very greatly. He took their advice, and threw into the sea a favourite and costly ring. But in a few days a fisherman brought to the palace a large fish he had caught, and when it was cut open, there was the ring inside! This seemed to them a sure sign that the gods were keeping a dreadful trouble for him; and the story, unlike the fairy tales, ended with the king losing all his lands, money, and the crown itself.

Even to-day, in some countries, people try to cover up their happiness by pretending that they are really rather miserable and poor, from a feeling very much like this.

Jesus did not teach anything of the kind.

He knew that we did get very unhappy at times, and that there is a great deal of trouble in this world. But He tells us that this is not because God sends it. God is a loving Father, who wants the best for all His children. It is we who make the trouble for ourselves and for each other.

The fact is, we do not know how to be happy, but need to be taught. Perhaps you think it is strange to have to learn happiness, as if it were like arithmetic or some other thing taught at school. Yet, if you have to learn one thing, why not another? Do you not often fail to be happy, even when you have planned to have a real good time?

There was the party you had got ready for when the measles broke out, so that you were vexed and unhappy. There was that tiresome man that kept your father in town the very day he was going to take you to see the aeroplanes. There was the rainy day that spoilt the cricket match.

"But we could not learn how to control the weather, or to stop people coming on business, or prevent the outbreak of measles," you will say. No, of course you could not. But could you not have learnt to be happy in some other way than the one you had

planned ? Was it necessary to be miserable ? Why should you have to depend on things to make you happy ?

Indeed, if you think about it, you have often failed to be happy when the weather was fine and everything went as you planned it. You began to quarrel with each other ; you found the fine weather itself a burden, and got impatient with the games you yourself had chosen. I think you must admit that you really do not know much about being happy, and have a great deal to learn.

Now, if you look at the things that Jesus said about being blessed, you will see that they are very different from what most people think about happiness. So different that only a few really believe Him. Very many of us do not like to *say* that we disbelieve Jesus, but there is one test. If we really believed Him we should be trying to do as He says, and you have only to look round to see that not many are working hard at it, at any rate.

He talks about blessedness in connection with being poor, and hungry, and meek, and having people say horrid things about us. That is not the usual idea of happiness at all. Perhaps there are different ways of

being poor, or hungry, and we have not yet found out the right way. Perhaps happiness itself is different from our idea of it. Anyhow, we have much to learn, and the fact that so many people do not find happiness by being rich or famous or powerful or by running after pleasure ought to make us willing to try to see what Jesus means.

In this first talk, I want you to notice that Jesus uses this word "blessed." It means much more than simply having things go well. It is rather *being well ourselves*.

You know that if you have a bilious attack, or a bad cold, or a headache, or if your joints are stiff with rheumatism, it is hard to be comfortable; but if you are perfectly well, you do not need to bother about cushions and pillows, easy chairs and things of that sort. You even enjoy work and games in which there are plenty of hard knocks.

Blessedness is something like that in our spirits. The trouble at present is that we are not healthy in our inner selves, in our mind and will and heart. We have aches and pains in our tempers; we are rheumatically in our love and affection; we are bilious in our way of looking at other

people. So we try to find happiness in pleasant things, just as we try to get comfort and ease from cushions in our bodily illness. Jesus says we need to be made healthy in spirit, and the happiness will come without our looking for it.

When an iron plate which should be perfectly flat has a bulge in it, you might easily think that the proper thing to do was to hit that bulge as hard as you could with a hammer, to knock it flat. If you tried that, you would find the bulge getting worse instead of better. A workman who knew his business would take the hammer, but he would tap all round the bulge, not on it. So people think that the way to be happy is to try hard to get things to make them so, but they very seldom get real happiness like that; often they get more tired of things. But those who let their own happiness go, and listen to Jesus about the true way of living, as God wants us to live, find in the end a greater happiness than they knew anything about at first. They have become more than happy; they have grown to be well in spirit, which is blessed.

Jesus is the great Physician, and we have to understand this first, that we need to

be made well. When you are ill, the doctor thinks first of curing your disease, not of stopping the pain. He could give you a drug for that, but it would be very different from making you well.

A party of engineers was camping in the Sierra Nevada, very high up, where it was exceedingly cold, so that they felt wretched. Some drank a lot of whisky, and became, as they thought, very comfortable and jolly. They did not *feel cold*. Others refused, because they knew that they would really be colder; it would only be the feeling that was stopped. When the morning came, those who had put up with the feeling were all right, but those who had made themselves feel comfortable were frozen to death.

So Jesus wants us to give up some of these foolish ways of making ourselves feel happy when the real trouble is getting worse. He is more concerned with making us strong and healthy in spirit than in giving us pleasure all at once. But when we are well in spirit, there will be a greater gladness than we have imagined. Then we shall "enter into the joy of our Lord."

IV

WITH GOD AS KING

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.”—MATT. v. 3.

I HAVE talked with men of a good many countries, and somehow each one seemed quite proud of belonging to his own nation. The Germans think it is a fine thing to be German, the French to be French, the Japanese to be Japanese, and I am sure you are all very proud of your own country. This is a good thing, as long as you do not think badly of the others. But we could all agree that to belong to the Kingdom of God is the very finest of all.

For one thing, while the rulers and kings of the different countries sometimes do things we admire, sometimes they make us ashamed of them, so that we would rather forget what they have done, if they belong to us. But God is always right, always wise, always loving. It is splendid to have Him for King.

Then we are English, American, French or German because we happened to be born so, and whether we are good or bad, wise or foolish, makes no difference. Those who break the laws of the land still belong to it, as well as those who keep them. But only those belong to God's Kingdom who really are ruled by Him. That means that they let Him make them true, right and loving.

This is why Jesus says of "the poor in spirit" that they are blessed, because they belong to the Kingdom of God. But perhaps you do not see why? You could understand if He said the loving, the true and the faithful belong. But what has it to do with being poor in spirit?

Let us see what else He said about it. "No man can have two masters." We can understand that. Even in our games we can only have one captain or leader, or there is trouble at once, and in the more important things it is impossible to have different people giving directions at the same time.

At the famous battle of Waterloo, when the Emperor Napoleon was making a last fight against his enemies, who had many more soldiers than he had himself, it seemed likely at one time that he might win. He

had managed to split the line of the enemy in two, so that he could fight one part while Marshal Ney, one of his great generals, was fighting the other. There was a third part of his army on its way to help, and if it had come up in time it would have made all the difference, because a great many of the enemy's troops were still a long way off.

But the poor general who was commanding this third part got orders first from Napoleon and then from Ney, and when he turned to go to one, there came a command to go to the other. The result was that he lost a lot of time in turning about, and when he did get to the fight, it was too late. He could not serve two masters.

So Jesus says that in the Kingdom of God only God can be King, and there is one other master in particular who cannot be served at the same time as God. He calls this master Mammon, which means riches, or treasure. There was a very rich man who felt that he had not got the best kind of life; the kind that is so good that it lasts. So he came to talk to Jesus about it, and ask His advice. Jesus saw what was the matter, and advised him to give up his money to people who really needed it; but that was just what he could not do.

Then Jesus said that it was a very difficult thing for people who trusted in riches to belong to the Kingdom of God.

You see, if you love money, it is very hard to do the loving, true and right things which mean letting the money go, and you will be tempted to do mean things to get hold of money. But if you love God, you will not do a mean thing or keep from doing the right things for any money in the world.

If you trust in money to keep you from unpleasant things, and are afraid of being poor, you will be greedy for more and worry about whether you may lose it. You will not have time to think properly about what God wants you to do. But if you trust God best, you will just do what you feel sure He wants, and leave it to Him to see that you have what is necessary. The money you get by being industrious, as you ought to be, will be your servant, to use in doing God's will, instead of your master.

Now perhaps you begin to see why it is that the poor, rather than the rich, can best be ruled by God, and therefore are blessed.

But it is just here that we must look clearly to see what Jesus really meant, or we may make a big mistake. A great

many people are poor and have not enough to eat, or to wear, or decent houses to live in, and they do not seem as if they were blessed at all. Neither do they seem to be ruled by God. You must notice those words "in spirit." It is not of those who are compelled to be poor, while they want all the time to be rich, that Jesus is speaking.

In the *Arabian Nights* there is a story of a man who had only a little money, which he wanted to make into a great deal. He bought a basketful of glass things and set out to sell them. The day was hot, and he sat for a time on a bench to rest, with the basket at his feet. Then he began to think how much he would get by selling his glass, and how with the money he would buy more, and go on making money till he was very rich. Then he imagined people coming to him for favours, and how he would spurn those he did not like away. He was so full of all this imagining that he actually kicked out with his foot—and smashed the basket of glass things. Then he was very miserable indeed.

No! the "poor in spirit" are those who are free in their hearts and minds from the selfishness that wants more than others, from the fear of losing riches and the anxious

care of keeping them. There was another man, some time ago, named Francis, who lived at a place in Italy called Assisi. He grew up in a rich home, but when he became a man he felt that all the fine clothes and the luxurious food and the power to make other people do as he wished were not really good for him. Instead of helping him to be a better and happier man, they were spoiling his life. They seemed to take up his thoughts and to crowd out of his heart the love of God. So he gave them all up, and wore the simplest of clothes, ate the plainest of food, and never owned any property for himself. He found this new way of life so helpful that he used to speak of his "Lady Poverty." He found the blessedness of a spirit that was independent of riches.

We cannot all do that. God may want us to take charge of businesses that need a great deal of money to carry them on, and most people have to care for their own families, which means getting money by working, so that they may be fed and brought up properly. But we can remember that blessedness is not in these things, but in the way they are used, and that the only way of using them properly is to care for what God wants first all the time.

Have you ever grizzled and growled because you could not have what you call "nice things"? Then you have not been poor in spirit, and the fact that you did grizzle shows that you were not blessed. If you had been thinking first of being loving and helpful, and had used the things you had in this way, God would have filled your heart with a happiness of His own, better than anything you could buy.

Once a man was walking across some hills one Sunday morning, while the church bells were calling people to come and worship God, and was surprised to hear a lad, near the road, saying the alphabet through. It was the more surprising because the boy was on his knees as if he were praying. So the man went up and asked him what he was doing. "Oh," said the shepherd boy, "I can never go to church, because I have to mind these sheep, and I do not know any prayers or proper words to say to God, so I say my alphabet to Him. He is very good, and knows what I need, so I think He will take the letters and make them into the prayer that I ought to pray."

I think that that boy was wiser than many of us who often pray and work for things that are not really good. Jesus said

that God knew before we asked Him the things that we really need, and if we just open our hearts and lives to Him, He will fill them with the true riches.

It is only those who can be independent of the things outside them who know how to use them properly when it is God's will that they should have them. They know how to possess them, and not to be possessed by them. It is a terrible thing to be the slave of things, instead of being the servant of God.

V

THE TRUE LANDLORDS

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.”—MATT. v. 5.

MANY people get houses, or lands, or riches of some kind, not as the result of their own work, but because some one has died and left it to them. This we call an inheritance. Sometimes the news comes quite as a surprise that an uncle or some relative, who had gone to a distant country and become almost forgotten, has left a fortune for his “next of kin,” as the lawyers say. Perhaps, like me, you know all about your uncles, and are pretty sure you will never get anything in that way.

But Jesus here speaks of a wonderful inheritance; nothing less than the earth itself. And He says that no matter who our uncles may be, we can inherit it if we are of a certain character ourselves. So you and I can have a try.

First of all, we must understand what it is really to possess anything. I say "really," because you may have a right to many things without truly possessing them. For instance, when I was at school I had the fortune to win a special prize, given by some one who wanted us to learn how our bodies were made. Of course I was glad, but when it came, I did not know what to make of it. There was a sliding brass tube with a curiously shaped piece of glass and a pair of shutters at one end, and a hole to look through at the other. It was called a spectroscope, but as I did not understand it, it went into a drawer and lay there for a good many years. It was mine in a way, but as I did not use it, I got no good from it, and did not really possess it. Now I know that it is a wonderful instrument. Those who understand how to use it can tell what the sun and the stars are made of, though they are so many millions of miles away. They can even find out by its use whether those stars are getting nearer to us or not. You have to be able to use things before they are really your own, and any one who wants to inherit the earth must be able to get the good out of it.

Now, what is the character of the people

who will inherit the earth? Jesus says that it is the *meek*. Perhaps that is rather disappointing, especially to the boys, because you think that meek people are what you call muffs, unable to say "Bo!" to a goose. But that is a mistake. At any rate, it is not what is meant by meekness in the Bible.

Moses was called "very meek," but it took much more than a goose to stop him from saying and doing what he knew to be right. He had to deal with some very troublesome people, but he stood up to them every time. There was the great King Pharaoh, so powerful and cruel, but Moses got the Israelites out of his country. You can read about all the other men, too, who tried to get the best of him, and you will see that they found him too strong for them.

Jesus, too, said of Himself that He was meek and lowly of heart, and you never find that He was afraid of anything or anybody. Sometimes He had to say very stern things to people who had great power, and He said them, though He was never unjust or unkind.

So we must not think of meekness as lack of courage; you can be very brave and very meek at the same time. What you

cannot be is both proud and meek. Those who think a great deal about themselves, about their own dignity, about their own riches and what they call their own rights, are those who are not meek.

Now, most people do not seem to believe Jesus about this. They think that if they do not insist on having things for themselves and having proper attention paid to them, everything will go wrong. But they make two big mistakes.

First, it really is true that you cannot get the best of things if you are always thinking about yourself. You spoil things that way. There was a lovely engine in a playroom, made to run by itself on rails, when wound up, with a brake to stop it whenever one wanted. But the two children in the room were quarrelling as to who should have it to play with. The boy said it was given to him, and he meant to keep it to himself. The girl said that it wasn't fair; nobody gave her engines, and she could make it go just as well as he could, and he was a mean thing. All the time they quarrelled they were unhappy, and there lay the engine on its side, doing no good to either of them. Worse still, they began to grab at it, and soon they had trodden the

rails out of shape and pulled the wheels off the engine, as they tried to snatch it from each other. So the whole thing was spoilt, and neither of them possessed it.

The second mistake is to think that things get less through sharing. There is just as much cake when two or three eat it as when one eats it, and there is very much more enjoyment. Of course if you are greedy you cannot get any good out of the others' enjoyment, but if you are meek it will be ever so much better fun. There was a very lonely little boy, one morning, because mother was busy, and he was not well enough to run out of doors and find some playmates. He was tired of his toys, and did not know what to do with himself. Then one of his companions came in to see him, and what a difference it made. Out came those same toys, and soon they were deep in all kinds of games.

This is true not only of toys, but of all that the earth contains. It is said in the Bible that "the earth is full of the loving-kindness of God." So it is, but only those people who are loving themselves find it out. Meekness is just a name for what is a great part of Love. It is being able to forget yourself, so as to be free to care for others.

The men and women who have tried to conquer it all for themselves have often spoilt things for other people, but they have never been able to use it for their own real good. Long ago a great soldier king, named Pyrrhus, was talking to a friend about his intention to conquer Italy. "What will you do after that?" said the friend. "Then I will take Sicily." "And when you have won Sicily?" "Then I shall conquer Greece and Macedonia." "And after that?" "Then there is Carthage." "And then?" "Why, then we can settle down and enjoy what we have won." "Well," said the friend, "why cannot you begin to enjoy things at once, without all that fighting?"

Pyrrhus, Alexander, Napoleon and many others have fought to get lands and power, and have won many victories, as they are called. But while they have caused so many people to be killed, and have laid lands waste and destroyed towns, with so much that men and women had worked hard to produce, they have never been able to possess the earth in the sense of getting the real good out of it.

You see, "the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof," so of course it is only His children who can inherit it. That is, those

who are like Him in their spirit. God is always giving, not grabbing, and He wants everybody to get the best of things.

Fortunately, this great inheritance which the children of God can have as soon as they will learn how to use it comes to us not because God is dead, like other inheritances, but because He is alive. A son who inherits his dead father's money often uses it in ways that his father would have disliked very much. But we can only inherit God's earth by using it in His way.

Another splendid thing is that when we do use it by sharing it, we do not keep anybody else out. The more people help each other, the more the earth gives to them, and the lovelier it is to look at. Because what we see depends on what we are. People who are full of their own importance are not usually those who see the beauty of the trees, the flowers, the sea and the sky.

Even now, we can inherit a great deal of the earth, simply by using what comes our way as God meant us to, and some day, when people generally have listened to Jesus and become wiser, we shall find that it is the meek, not the proud and the pushing, to whom the earth belongs.

VI

THE ROCKS IN THE ROAD

“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.”—MATT. v. 4.

I THINK I can hear some one saying, “Where is the blessedness of mourning only to be comforted again?” That would be a very natural question to ask, and I believe Jesus would have been glad for you to ask it. He did not want people to take His words without understanding them fully. And at first sight it does not seem as if we got any further in having our tears dried than before the tears were there. You would rather not need to be comforted at all; it would be more satisfactory to be glad all the time.

So it would. But the trouble Jesus found was that we live in a world where there is a great deal to trouble us, and that we are not the kind of people to be glad all the time. Are you always happy? Jesus is telling us how we can come to a gladness that is worth while and will really last.

He is showing us the right way in which to deal with the things that cause sorrow. So many people choose the wrong way.

Do you remember that old story about the prince who came to see what one of his towns was like? One of the first things he noticed was that the roads were in a very bad state. They were full of bumps and hollows, that made riding difficult and even painful, and were very bad for the poor horses that drew the carts. But no one troubled to put them right. Some never rode or drove themselves, and did not care about what happened to other people or to the horses. Others who did use them just grumbled at everybody else, but would give no time nor labour nor money for the mending.

So one night the prince went out, while every one was in bed, and rolled a big rock right over one of the worst of the holes in the middle of the road. When the day came, and the horses and carts began to be driven that way, there was a great fuss. Drivers and riders were very angry, and said what they would like to do to the man that had played that trick. Of course it blocked the way a good deal, and those behind got very impatient with those in front; the people

who were walking also were in danger, because as there was so little room to go round the rock the drivers came on to the footpath. But while there was grumbling, shouting, anger and much strong language, nobody did anything to remove the rock, until after a long time a man came along and saw what was the matter. Then he stopped and said, "Dear me, what a lot of mischief that rock is doing. I am sorry for this; I must get it away." So he put his shoulder to the stone and rolled it right out of the way. When he had moved it off the hole, there was a bag of money underneath, addressed to "The one who moves the rock." When the other people saw it, they wished they had done it themselves.

You see, there were those who got angry and blamed others for it. There were those who got round by putting other people in danger. There were those who did not care a bit about it, as it did not inconvenience them. None of these brought the mischief to an end. It was the one who was really sorry about it that "took the trouble," as we say, and the trouble came to an end.

That is what Jesus says is the blessed thing. He does not ask us to pull long faces and weep for nothing. There is quite

enough in the world to be sorry about without going out of our way to make more. But He does want us to be sorry, for that is what mourning means, about the bad things that are there already. It is only in this way that they can be cured. It is what He calls sometimes "taking up our cross and following Him."

Some of the worst things are in ourselves. Like those roads, our ways badly need mending; they are always making trouble for ourselves and other people. What are you doing about your own faults? Some boys and girls I know are very touchy about them. They hate to be reminded that they are careless and untidy, so that mother gets quite tired clearing up after them; they resent being told that their sharp tongues wound other people, or whatever their particular failing may be.

I know others who do their best to prevent their faults being noticed, and when they are noticed, they are very ingenious in finding excuses for them. But perhaps the worst of all are those who do not care. So the faults go on, generally getting worse. There is only one way in which you can get rid of them. You must begin by being sorry, genuinely sorry, about them. When Jesus

began to go about preaching, He told the people that the beautiful Kingdom of God was quite near at hand, if they would come into it, but the very first thing they must do was to repent. That is, to be sorry for all the things that kept them from being ruled in God's way.

Then there is such a great deal in the world outside ourselves to be sorry about, or to mourn for. Jesus saw in His time that there were great numbers of men and women, boys and girls, who had very hard times, not enough to eat and drink, or clothes to wear, sometimes without homes, often sick, and getting into all kinds of trouble. That made Him very sorry. There were many more who were left to grow up without proper teaching about God and His Love, so that they got into bad ways, and that made Him sorrier still. Indeed, it was because Jesus was so very sorry about all these things that He came into the world to put things right. He might well have said, "Those men and women have brought all this trouble on themselves. They fight each other; they are greedy and snatch from one another; they are silly, proud, selfish, lazy; they tell lies and have gone so far wrong that they cannot distinguish good

from evil. They are fond of the nasty things that bring sickness and death instead of the things that mean health and life. What can they expect?" It would all have been true. But you know that He loved us so much that He could not help mourning for it and taking all the trouble to Himself. He did not shrink from facing anything that would save us out of the evil state into which our sins had brought us.

It might have been expected that the people who had plenty and had been well taught would have been glad to help Jésus all they could to make things better for the hungry, the ill-clothed, the homeless, the sick and the wrong-doers. What He actually found was that they thought so much about themselves that they did not really care. At any rate they were not sorry enough to do anything about it, and that is the real test.

So Jesus told them that the happiness they got by refusing to be sorry for others and by avoiding trouble could not last. Even if they enjoyed themselves for a time, it really was a poor sort of happiness, and certainly they could not expect to be at home with God and Himself in the next life, because God is pure and loving, and only those who

are pure and loving themselves can possibly be at home with Him.

But if we look all the wrong things right in the face and are so sorry for them that we help wherever we can, we shall be comforted. I wish we had a word that would mean in English all that is meant in the word we translate that way. It means something like this: called to God's side and given the comfort and help we need. That means much more than being where we were before, does it not? It is worth while going through the sorrow to find that God is by our side and on our side. Here are two verses written by Mr. Robert Hamilton. If you do not understand them altogether just now, learn them by heart, and some day you will.

I walked a mile with Pleasure ;
She chattered all the way,
But left me none the wiser
For all she had to say.

I walked a mile with Sorrow,
And ne'er a word said she ;
But, oh, the things I learned from her
When Sorrow walked with me !

VII

THE BEST SAUCE

"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."—MATT. v. 6.

HAVE you ever been really hungry, and not able to get enough to eat? I do not mean as much as you like. We can go on eating long after we have had enough to satisfy the real hunger. I think it was Dr. Johnson, the famous writer, who said he never had as many peaches as he could eat, and there is the well-known case of the little boy who thought he could eat some more if he stood up!

There is a great difference between hunger and greediness. Hunger is painful before it is satisfied; with greediness the pain frequently comes afterwards. But perhaps the most important difference is that if you stop when hunger is appeased you keep healthy and strong, while if you eat for greediness you get flabby and feeble.

Jesus did not say that unsatisfied hunger is a good thing. It is only a little while since we heard about Captain Scott and his companions on the ice and snow round about the South Pole. You may have read or been told how the little party was returning to join the others, and hoping to reach a place where food was stored. But a terrible blizzard came on, and two of them were very weak, so they could not go fast. Then the food they had with them came to an end, and at last they died for lack of food. Even when people do not die, they get weak and unable to work if they do not have enough to eat and drink, and some kinds of diseases get hold of them more readily. So Jesus told us that if we were really His disciples we should always want to see that hungry people were fed.

But if the food is ready for us, hunger is a splendid thing. How you enjoy your meals when you come in from a ramble, or a good game, or especially from a bit of work into which you have put your heart as well as your muscle! There is an old story about a country called Sparta, where no one was allowed to be too comfortable, lest he should lose his manliness. A great king who came to that country had heard of

the celebrated Spartan black broth, and wanted to taste it. When he said he did not like it at all, the cook said he had not used the proper sauce with it. "What is that?" said the king. "Hunger," answered the cook.

There are a great many people who do not bring the sauce of hunger to their food. Sometimes it is because they never earn it by hard work. You cannot take in properly unless you are always giving out. People who want to eat and sleep well should get hungry and tired first by doing something that is worth while.

When boys and girls are not ready for their meals, mother begins to get uneasy, and wants to know the reason why. Of course, those apples and cakes that were eaten not long before dinner may account for it. It is a bad habit to eat between meals, but the appetite will probably be ready again by tea-time. If, however, they go on for a long time without getting hungry, it is more serious, and the doctor will have to be fetched.

So there are two bad things : to be hungry without getting food, and to have food without being hungry. The blessed thing is to be hungry first and then to be satisfied.

That is how we grow strong and healthy. On the whole, Jesus seems to say that it is not so bad to be without food as to be without appetite. At any rate, it is usually more easy to bring food to a hungry person than to give a person an appetite when he has none.

But of course you know that it is not only food for our bodies that we need. We want to grow in mind and heart and in every power of life, and for this we must have the proper food and *we must be hungry for it*.

We cannot do much with boys and girls or men and women who do not want to grow greater in mind and larger of heart. A long time ago, in England, there were two brothers; one was eager to grow, and the other was content to stay as he was. The first learnt all he could and used all he learnt, and after some time he became a great bishop. Then his brother began to think that it was not fair that he should be just ploughing in the field while the other was in such a high place. So he went to the Bishop and asked him to make him a great man. By that he meant just put him in an important position. But the Bishop said, "Brother, if your plough is broken, I can have it mended; if your horse

dies, I can buy you another; but I cannot make you a great man."

That is how we make it hard for Jesus. As you sometimes sing in the hymn, "He died to make us good." But even His dying could not make us good if we did not want to be. It is like providing a great banquet for people who have no appetite. Honestly, do you want to be *good*? I know that many people do not want to be bad because they are afraid of being punished, but being good is more than fearing punishment. Others want to be thought well of, or to get rich, or something else which they think will come to them if they are good. That is being hungry for riches, or for fame, or whatever it is, not for goodness. If they thought they could get these things by being bad, they would not trouble about being good.

I have called it goodness because you know that word better than "righteousness," and it really is the same thing. But I wonder if you have any clear idea of what it actually means? Probably most of you might be inclined to say it is not doing wrong. I want you to understand that it is a very much bigger and better thing than that.

Goodness is being like God. That is what Jesus means by it. Just as God is true, we must be true; just as He is merciful, we must be merciful; just as He is loving, we must be loving also. That is a tremendous thing, much bigger than being careful not to break rules. It is more than doing what we are told, more than any kind of doing. It is *being*. And the better we grow to be, the more we understand how much more growing there is to do, and the more eager we are for the right kind of food which will make us grow in this goodness. The people who are not really hungering and thirsting after goodness are content with a very little.

But Jesus says that those who really do hunger after it *shall be satisfied*. That means two things.

First, there are many things that men and women want very badly, so that they are keen and eager and willing to work hard for them, which do not satisfy as they expected, when they have got them. It seems a fine thing to be rich, but ever so many rich people are more miserable than when they only had a little. To be famous often is a nuisance instead of a joy, and so with pretty well everything except this one thing. To be true, just, loving, and like

God generally, is the most certain happiness in the end. All the trouble and pain come first, as I said was the case with true hunger. When we get goodness, it is satisfying, and lasts.

Secondly, every one who hungers after goodness sufficiently to persevere after it, is sure of getting it. It is true that perseverance and a great desire will bring many things very often. But you cannot reckon securely on it. Two generals may both want very badly to win the battle which they are fighting against each other, but if one wins the other must lose. That happens with many things in this world. But those who hunger to be good never hinder one another, but rather help. There is no limit to the amount of goodness, so that some must go short if others take a great deal.

The chief thing is, however, that it is exactly what God Himself wants for us, and what Jesus came to make possible for us. He calls Himself the Bread of Life. He gave Himself even to death for us, so that the bread was broken for us. If God means us to be good, and Jesus gave Himself for the same purpose, there is no fear that our hunger will go unsatisfied. "We shall

be satisfied when we awake in His likeness.”
The only danger is that we shall not be sufficiently in earnest to let Jesus come into our hearts and wills and minds, so that He makes us good.

VIII

EYESIGHT AND HEART-SIGHT

“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”—MATT. v. 8.

GOOD eyesight is one of the greatest blessings in this life, and boys and girls who have it should be very thankful. We know people and places chiefly by what we call their looks, though of course other things help. You remember the story of Jacob and Esau, and how perplexed Isaac was in his blindness when the son who asked his blessing smelt like Esau but sounded like Jacob. If Isaac could have seen him he would have known at once.

But it is possible to forget that we need more than eyes to see many things which are often the most important things of all. The eye is only an instrument and does not see by itself. Perhaps you have used a photographic camera, and know how the image is formed on the screen at the back.

The camera itself does not see the image; only a living being can see. Your eye is like a camera in your head; it does not see, but you use it for seeing with. Clever people who know how our bodies work, tell us that in some wonderful way it is a part of the brain at the back of the head that helps us to the actual seeing. If that part is injured people often go blind. But even the brain does not see; it is ourselves who do that.

That is why Jesus talks about the heart, not the eye, in connection with seeing God. Good heart-sight is even more necessary than good eyesight. The eye shows us pictures, but what the pictures mean to us depends on the kind of people we are.

A friend of mine told a story about a picture of Oliver Cromwell, which was hanging in a gallery. Sometimes, when artists paint pictures of great people, they leave out little things such as warts and pimples, or whatever they think the great people would like forgotten. But when this picture was painted, Cromwell told the artist to paint him "wart and all," so there is the wart in the picture to this day. Some people visiting the gallery came to this portrait, and looked at it. "Oh," they said,

"he has a wart." "Oh, what a funny wart." "Just look at that wart"; and that was about all they could see in the portrait of a great man like Oliver Cromwell.

Their eyes were good enough, but it helps us to understand that we only see truly what we give our attention to, and what we give our attention to depends on what we are ourselves. That is true of things, and truer still of people. Small-minded folk cannot recognize large-minded men and women. They say, "I can't think what you see in them to make a fuss about." Of course, if you only look at the warts you cannot see the strength or the tenderness or the honesty that shines through the face.

I do not know whether we shall ever need our eyes to see God, but I am sure we shall need our hearts. People whose hearts are not pure not only cannot see God, but they find it very difficult to see reflections of Him in other people.

Now, what did Jesus mean by a pure heart? Of course you do not need to be told that that wonderful thing of muscle that keeps the body alive by pumping the blood round and round continually has nothing to do with it. The "heart" means

our inner life, where we love or hate, admire or scorn, are jealous or generous, purpose good or evil, and so on.

You can think of a pure heart as one that is quite clean from foul things. You know that it is most important to keep cups, jugs, cans and all vessels that are used for food and drink perfectly clean. It is not only that we do not want to eat or drink dirt, but that a little dirt will often turn all the food or drink sour and bad. In the same way a dirty thought will poison all your other thoughts more or less. It will certainly prevent you from seeing God. There are some thoughts and words and deeds that we call specially "impure," and you cannot be too careful to keep them out of your heart. You may not think it matters much; you cannot "see the harm," but if you let them into your mind and heart they will coarsen the rest of your life too. The great trouble is that they prevent your seeing clearly the beautiful and pure things, so you have nothing to compare the ugly ones with; that is why you "do not see the harm."

But it is not only those things that are especially called impure that prevent our seeing clearly. Everything that is evil,

of whatever kind, Jesus calls impure. When He was talking about the greater importance of keeping the heart clean rather than going through ceremonies, He mentioned murder, theft, greed, malice, cheating, jealousy, pride, and things of that kind, which all come from the heart before we do the deeds. If any of these feelings, passions and thoughts are in our hearts we cannot see clearly the beauty and the truth that belong to God. If, for example, we are jealous, we cannot even see other people as they really are; we see instead false pictures of them we have made ourselves. How could we possibly see God?

There is another way of understanding purity of heart. If you take up anything made of gold or silver and look carefully, you will see some strange marks that have been pressed upon it. These show that it has been tested and found to be real gold or silver, as the case may be. It is as important to have the good things as to be without the bad. The fact that base metal is not mixed with it means that it is all pure metal, not that there are holes where the lead or tin might have been.

So, if you want to be pure of heart, it is not enough to fight against unclean thoughts

and imaginations ; you must grow to be good stuff all through. That is why the Psalmist prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, *and renew a right spirit within me.*" Jesus said if we merely turned out the evil spirit and left the house empty, it would come back with others worse than itself. So in place of anger we must cultivate love ; in place of falsehood we must have truth in us ; in place of greed there must be generosity, and so on.

It will be a long time before we are able to see God Himself ; I do not think we can expect it in this world, because there is so much to be done in us before we can be really pure in heart. I said just now that the impurity itself hinders us from understanding how impure it is, so that at first it may seem as if we were not so very far from being clean and true. But as we let God make us cleaner, we begin to see more clearly how very much has to be done in us. The best people are those who know more than others how far they fall short.

But though "no man has seen God at any time," He helps us to see something of His glory in proportion as we are made purer. Even in the things outside, in the flowers, the trees, the hills and the skies, we can see

a kind of reflection of Him. All noble and beautiful lives get their nobility and beauty from Him ; you remember how Jesus said, "Let your light shine, that men may see your good works, and glorify God." The cleaner we are, the better the light of God can shine through, but it always takes a pure heart to recognize it as coming from God.

Best of all, we can see God in Jesus Himself. The more we know Jesus, what He really is like, the more we know what God is like. But you remember that many people could not see God in Him at all. Many of them thought He was just a presumptuous working-man, who was trying to teach His betters. That was because some of them were jealous, others were proud, and others again only eager to keep the place and power they had.

So you and I may talk a great deal about Jesus, now that it is the proper thing to say that He reveals God to us, but we shall only *see* God in Him as we become pure and the light of God shines in our hearts so that we can really see "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

IX

BOOMERANGS

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."—MATT. v. 7.

THERE used to be a delightful place to which I was sometimes taken as a boy, where all kinds of wonderful and interesting things could be seen. People were spinning glass in fine threads that were made into hanks as soft as silk; there was a model section of a coal mine, with the cage going up and down the shaft and the little trucks rolling along the passages. There was also a life-size mechanical figure of a man, cutting all sorts of clever capers on a trapeze swinging from the roof. But one thing always took my fancy tremendously. It was a disk of card made to fly off from a rapidly spinning top. It would mount up in curving flight high in the air, and then come round and down to the place it started from, so that the person who spun the top caught it with the hand.

You remember, too, that the Australian natives had a wonderful weapon called the boomerang, which did very much the same thing if it failed to hit what it was thrown at.

It seems that actions, words and thoughts are something like this ; if they are cruel, and we send them out with spite, the suffering we inflict on others somehow comes back to us in the end. If they are helpful and loving, or, as Jesus says, merciful, that too returns to ourselves.

There is an old story of a man who wanted to please a tyrant, whose delight it was to torture the people he did not like. This man took to the tyrant a model of a bull, made hollow so that the person to be punished or tortured could be put inside, and when a fire was lit underneath his moans and cries would be something like the noise a bull would make. That is the kind of thing that cruel people find amusing ! The tyrant was pleased, but at once ordered the man who invented it to be the first person put inside, *to see how it worked*. Somehow it did not seem quite so funny then.

Happily it is not only cruelty that works back on the people that are cruel. Those who do merciful acts find that mercy also

comes back to them. Here is another story. In the days before railways became our usual way of getting from one place to another, a boy was trudging along the road with a bundle towards one of the seaports, when the coach came along. A lady who was riding on the coach noticed this boy, and as there was a stop just then, she asked where he was going. When she found that he had a long way to go, and had no money to help him on his way, she paid his fare to go by the coach, and talked kindly to him about his future.

The lad went out to one of the new countries, and there by hard work and taking his opportunities he made a comfortable fortune. Like many others, he came back to spend his later years in his old country, and in his turn was riding on the coach, when he saw an old woman trudging on. He remembered how he had been helped many years ago when he was tramping the road, stopped the coach and had her taken up at his expense. They got into conversation, and to their great surprise, it turned out that she was the lady who had helped him. She had lost her money and become poor. You may be sure that he did not let her want after that, and she found that

that merciful deed had come back to her with a blessing.

Of course things do not happen quite in that way as a general rule. The people that are helped so often pass right out of our knowledge. Besides, it would not be good for us if the kindness came back from the same people we had been kind to. We should expect repayment, and then it would only be a business act, like investing money. Jesus wants us to be merciful because it is a good thing in itself, no matter whether people are grateful or ungrateful, or whether they are in a position to repay or not. What he says is that merciful people will find mercy, from other people generally, and certainly from God Himself.

In the same way the cruel people often take good care that their victims cannot hurt them back. All the same, sooner or later some one comes along who is strong enough to be cruel to them, and then they find that they have no friends to help them.

Have you read or heard of the cruel Judge Jeffreys, who was so savage with the poor people brought before him, especially in connection with Monmouth's Rebellion? He knew that he had the king behind him, and could send people to prison and

all kinds of punishment, if they gave him the least excuse, so he let all his cruelty have full play. But it happened that the king himself had to run away out of the country, and then Jeffreys was for a time hunted as if he were a wild beast instead of Lord Chief Justice.

Of course, mercy must not interfere with justice, which is so fine a thing that we must be very careful not to spoil it. Boys and girls at school, I know, will forgive their masters and mistresses almost anything if only they are just.

But do you not make a mistake sometimes by thinking that justice means giving as much punishment as you think some one ought to have? And that you yourselves are the people to do it? There must be punishment in this world, but it is so dangerous a thing that only those into whose hands it is especially put ought to have anything to do with it, and they should be very careful.

The justice that all of us are concerned about is to give everybody the good they ought to have. Even the punishment ought to be for their good. Now, of course we ought not to give anybody *less good* than they ought to have, but there is no reason

why we should not give *more*, as long as it is ours to give. Do you remember the story Jesus told ?

He said that a man hired workmen for a full day's work, and promised them a full day's wage in return. Then he hired some more after some hours had gone by, then some more again after another interval. At the end of the day they all had the full day's wage. Then those who had worked the whole day said it was not fair ; they ought to have had more, or the others ought to have had less. But you see, they had full justice, and no wrong was done them. The others had more than they were strictly entitled to, because the man, thinking, I suppose, of their wives and children, who would want just as much food, gave it out of his own pocket. It is unjust to give less than we owe, but not to give more, provided it is ours to give. We do justice, and a little over.

So I think there are two things to remember, if we are to be merciful. The first is, "*Never be cruel.*" I am afraid boys and girls often are, just because they do not think. They like to feel their power over weak things. They find fun in teasing, though if they did think, they would remem-

ber that they hate being teased themselves. People and animals who are weak, or misshapen, or peculiar in any way, seem to be fit subjects for fun. But you remember what the frogs said to the boys that stoned them in the fable, "It is not fun for the frogs."

The other thing is, "*Always be ready to do a good turn.*" Don't ask, as so many do, "Why should I bother about them? I don't owe them anything; it's not my fault they're in trouble; it's not my place to get them out." Do it because it is a good turn, and because it is being like God. "*Be ye merciful, as your Father in heaven is merciful,*" said Jesus. He does not ask which are the farmers who deserve it and which are crusty curmudgeons who never say a "Thank you." He sends His sunshine and rain on all alike.

But remember this also. Though God is merciful to all, it is not every one who receives His mercy. There are two sides to everything; there is receiving as well as giving. If we say, "Oh, God is merciful, whatever we do, so it does not matter," we are making a big mistake. It is true that whatever we may be or do, God remains merciful, but it makes all the difference

whether we can receive His mercy or not. The unmerciful cannot; they make themselves hard, and unable to get near to God. "Blessed are the merciful: for they *shall receive mercy.*"

X

THE ORDER OF THE SONS OF GOD

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called SONS OF GOD.”—MATT. v. 9.

VERY often you may see some mysterious letters after a man's name, such as K.C.B., G.C.M.G., D.S.O., G.C.S.I., and others like them. These mean that the man belongs to some distinguished order, as it is called, and these letters are the initials of the title that belongs to him because of it.

Some of these orders only admit people of very high birth, either sovereigns or nobles of great rank, such as, for instance, the Order of the Garter, or the Order of the Golden Fleece. There is not much chance for you and me to get in, is there? Perhaps you have sometimes wished you had been born the son or daughter of a king or a duke, but it is too late to manage that now. We have to take our parents as they are and make the best of them. After all, we

should not like to change them, should we?

Other orders only take in great soldiers. No one can get into the first class of the Order of St. George of Russia, for example, unless as commanding general he has defeated an army of over 50,000 men, or taken the enemy's capital, or fought so well that he has brought the war to an end favourable to his side. I believe that nobody now alive has won that distinction.

But Jesus tells of a title which does not depend upon whether one is a prince or a peasant, and certainly does not require us to do any fighting. It is a far higher title than any of these others. He says, "They shall be called Sons of God." *The Order of the Sons of God!* Some of the titles which people invent for themselves are very high-sounding, but they are not necessarily true. But if God calls us Sons, we may be sure that it is neither fancy nor flattery, but that there is good reason for it. That reason is that those who are so called are really like Himself. It is being like in nature that is called sonship in the Bible. We are told that we were created at the first in His likeness, but that likeness has become very distorted through our wrong doing. Jesus came to restore that likeness of character.

Instead of making war, those who are enrolled in this order must be makers of peace. Now I want you to understand that because this is a great title it cannot be gained cheaply. I could, if necessary, say a good deal about the horror and folly of war. It does mean untold misery and death to multitudes of people, and never settles any dispute according to the right. Happily, people are beginning to understand this now, and that war is a disgrace to civilization; soon, we hope, we shall have learnt to settle the disputes of nations as we settle the disputes of private people, by a proper court of justice.

But I want to look at the great side of warriors, so that you may see that peace-making is something greater still. The heroes of war are at any rate very brave, and they risk their lives, often lay them down, for their country, or for some cause which they love better than themselves. The heroes of peace must be at least as brave. God does not call cowards His Sons.

There was a boy once, who was asked if he could forgive his enemies, as Jesus said. "I think so," he said hesitatingly; and then, quite sure, "I could if they were

bigger than I." Now, that will not do. That is not making peace ; it is only shirking trouble.

There was another boy whose father was a fighting admiral, and had won a great reputation in the battles he had fought at sea. You can perhaps imagine what this brave man felt when he heard that his son had joined some people who refused to fight. Of course, he thought he had a coward if not a madman for a son, and at first he would have nothing to do with him. But the son, now grown a man, went on preaching that there was a better way of putting things right than killing people, although he was greatly abused and even put into prison for it. And being in prison was a terrible thing then. He showed that he could face angry crowds and suffer himself, though he would not inflict suffering on others, and at last the father was reconciled to his son, and admitted that he, too, was a hero. That was William Penn, the Quaker.

As a matter of fact, the reason that most people do not follow Jesus in giving up all fighting is that they are afraid of what will happen, and often unwilling to die without making others die first. Certainly we must do one thing or the other thoroughly. If we

are convinced that we must fight, then we must fight hard. If we want to follow Jesus in not fighting, we must be prepared to do that thoroughly too. To fight weakly or half-heartedly is the worst thing possible. So if we really give up war, we must be brave enough to take the consequences, whatever they are. Some people have had to die for peace, as others for war.

But these great peacemakers have often shown that their way is not only better, but really the stronger. This same William Penn was the founder of the great State of Pennsylvania. Charles II of England owed him a great deal of money, and gave him this land in payment. It was inhabited by Indians at the time, and I am sorry to say the white people often thought that these "savages," as they called them, had no right to their own land. They made war on them, and of course the Indians retorted in the same way, and often killed the white people, until both sides got to hate each other very bitterly. But Penn went out without any weapons to the Indians in this country which he now had to govern, and simply said to them that he wanted to be friends, and would always treat them with justice and goodwill. No treaty was written

and signed, but they just gave their word and trusted each other.

Now, it is a fact that for many years, as long as Penn governed that land and for some time after, although there were murders and fights in the other States between Indians and whites, there were none in Pennsylvania. It was only after a great many people had come to live there and the Quakers no longer governed that these troubles began.

Then there was David Livingstone. He, too, went among the "savages" of Africa, where no white man had been, and went also without weapons. He had come to tell the natives about Jesus, and he tried to live like Him too. The consequence was, not that they killed him, as many expected, but that they loved him and learned much from him about the way in which Jesus wants us to live.

You may not be able to be famous, like these two men, but there is a great deal of peacemaking you can do. There are quarrels which do not kill bodies of men, but do destroy love and happiness in homes and schools. They come very easily, for it is not quite true, as a proverb says, that it takes two to make a quarrel. One ill-tem-

pered and selfish person is enough. You can begin by seeing that you are not ill-tempered and selfish. The remedy for that is to try to see how things look to the other person, and to do as William Penn and Livingstone always did. They were eager, not for their own desires, but for what was just, and they thought of the others' good.

These are the two things that peacemakers must always follow: *justice and goodwill*. If all the world followed these, there would be no quarrels to patch up. They would all be stopped before they began! If quarrels have already begun, then try to understand both sides, so that you can help the quarrellers to understand each other.

Peacemaking is a business that takes a great deal of learning, like any other that is worth while, so do not be discouraged if you make mistakes. When you have made one, try to see where you were wrong, and you will do better next time.

Remember, too, that before you can make peace with others, you need to be at peace in your own heart. Jesus came to give us this peace, by reconciling us to God. God is the great Peacemaker, and is willing to forgive all we have done wrong, if only we are ready to be forgiven. He does not

want to kill us, but to make us really alive. So, when we have become at peace with Him, we can set about being peacemakers. "The Order of the SONS OF GOD."

XI

BULLIES AND MARTYRS

“Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness’ sake : for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. . . . Rejoice and be exceeding glad.”—MATT. v. 10 and 12.

WILLIAM COWPER, who wrote the celebrated story of John Gilpin, says that when he was a boy at school his life was made miserable by a bigger boy, who took great delight in tormenting him. There is a good deal of bullying in this world, among grown-up folk as well as among boys and girls. Where it is not done by blows, it is often done by saying nasty things that hurt. It is said, “Sticks and stones can break my bones, but hard words cannot hurt me,” but that is silly and untrue. Words can wound us in mind and heart quite as much as blows and kicks on the body. I hope none of you are bullies either with your fists or with your tongues.

Jesus had a very helpful saying, not for the bullies, but for those who are ill-treated,

not because they have done wrong, but because they have been right. He says that they belong to God's Kingdom. That is fine. But it seems rather strange when He says that the right way in which to take this bullying is to be glad. You would think it more reasonable to be glad when every one was saying nice things and treating you well, for it is pleasant to be praised. But Jesus says again that it is woe to us when every one speaks well of us.

You see, we live in a world in which are a great many cruel, selfish and false people. We have always to remember that, in trying to understand what Jesus says, and to remember, too, that we very easily become selfish, cruel and false ourselves if we do not look out. Now, if you do anything to hinder these people in their selfishness or cruelty or lying, they are pretty sure to dislike you, if they do not say nasty things and serve you badly. So that if *every one* speaks nicely about you, it means that you cannot have made a stand for kindness justice and truth. You have never taken the part of the weak against the bullies, or told the truth against the lies.

There are some people who are so mean and jealous that they cannot bear to hear

good men and women spoken well of. Long ago, in Athens, there was a man named Aristides, who was so fair and honest in all that he did that he was called Aristides the Just. But the people who did not like justice spread a lot of tales and stirred up a great deal of ill-will against him, so that at last a vote was taken whether or not he should be banished. It happened that Aristides himself saw a man who could not write, and offered to do it for him. Then it turned out that the man, who did not know Aristides, was voting for his banishment. "Why, what bad thing has he done?" asked Aristides. "Oh, I don't know," said the man, "but I'm tired of hearing him called Just!"

So you can easily understand how those who think they are really injured by having the truth told to them, or by being stopped from doing wrong things, get angry. You remember how a very bitter war was fought to prevent the slaves being set free, and how President Lincoln, who abolished slavery in the United States, was shot by some people who hated him for it. The more you learn about history, the more you will find that people who do right must expect to have many enemies.

Still, you may not see what there is to be

glad about in this. Of course, Jesus did not mean us to be glad that others were so wrong-headed and so wrong-hearted as to persecute. But it is something to be glad about that we are on God's side, isn't it? and that He gives us an opportunity, even though it may not seem a big one, of doing something for Him?

Do you know what a *martyr* really is? It does not mean some one who is killed, but some one who *witnesses*. The early Christian martyrs were those who persisted in saying that they were followers of Christ, no matter how dangerous it was. It was not because they liked being burnt, or eaten by wild beasts, that they were glad to do this, but because they rejoiced to do something for Him who had done so much for them. Many of them were not only full of courage before the pain came, but so full of joy while they were being tortured and killed that they did not seem to notice the pain.

It seems a pity to wait for this gladness until somebody is actually killing us. Is it not better to listen to what Jesus says and be glad in doing all the right things that come our way?

Some people like to talk of themselves as martyrs when they only mean that they are

suffering pain and feeling bad about it I have even heard of martyrs to toothache ! That is just nonsense ; there is nothing about toothache that wants people to talk about it. But there is one way in which you can witness for Jesus even in a pain of that kind. You can bear it bravely without whining about it, for that is what a true child of God would do. The less you say about it the better, for His witnesses do not call attention to themselves. But you had better have the tooth seen to as quickly as possible. God does not want us to go hunting for pain and trouble. There is quite as much already as will give us the opportunity of being cheerful and brave about it.

Whether you are cheerful or doleful when you are in trouble for doing the right thing depends on what you give your attention to. It is a wonderful thing, this attention. When we turn it on any one of the things we see, our mind gets full of that thing, but we see ever so many things without noticing them, because we have *not* turned our attention to them. The last time you took a walk you must have seen a great number of people with your eyes. How many can you recollect ? But if there had been an acrobat who bent his body backwards until

he looked at you from between his legs, you would have come home full of eagerness to tell about it.

I expect you would think it very hard if you had to go without your dinner! But Sir Isaac Newton, who wanted to find out many things, gave his attention so strongly to his work that many times, we are told, he would go on without noticing that he was hungry, or that the clock said it was time for dinner.

We have to do very much the same thing, if we are to be able to rejoice, as Jesus says, when people are nasty to us because we are telling the truth, or doing something that we feel sure is the right thing for us to do. Whether we get angry or make a moan about it or are glad depends entirely on what we give our attention to. If we let our thoughts go out most to the ill-temper or injustice of those who are hurting us, we shall probably be so angry or resentful about it that it will be impossible to be glad. If we turn our minds to the hurt that we feel, we shall go on feeling that hurt and be very sorry for ourselves; so sorry for ourselves that there will be no room for rejoicing. If we are attracted by the thought of what fine fellows we are to go on telling the truth

when it would be so much easier and more comfortable to tell lies, we shall be conceited prigs, and Jesus said that they were the last people to get into the Kingdom of God. But if we fix our attention on all the pieces of work that come our way to do for God, all the truth to tell for Him, all the help to be given to others because that is what He wants, all the work that belongs to us to be done faithfully without shirking, we shall not have any to spare for the anger and the pain, and we shall be really glad both that He lets us do them and that they are being done. Often we shall not even notice that the people of the other kind are saying nasty things.

It is a great secret of power, this turning the attention the right way. Perhaps you cannot manage it very much yet. Things seem to take hold of you, instead of your taking hold of them. But the more you practise it the better you will be able to do it. Turn your attention continually to what Jesus shows you is the best and He will fill you with a great joy that that beautiful thing can be helped on by your doing it as far as you can and cheerfully facing whatever those do to you who do not like God's beautiful will of truth, right and love.

XII

FINE CLOTHES

“Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow.”—
MATT. v. 28.

THERE are very few boys and girls who do not love to go out in the spring-time gathering flowers, and most people as they grow older love them even more. They are beautiful in the fields and in the hedgerows, and when we place them in our rooms they seem to bring some of the sunshine with them. They are often the most welcome gifts to sick people.

But Jesus asks us to do more than look at them. He wants us, especially those who are anxious about the clothes they shall wear, to consider how they grow.

Probably many of the boys will say that they are not at all anxious about their clothes. Well, perhaps not. To judge by the rumpled collars and sometimes the torn knees, you might be a little more careful

about them, if only to save your mother trouble. But I have noticed that the time soon comes when almost all boys suddenly change from being careless to being very particular about what they wear. Then they take great pains about the colour of their ties and socks, and the set of their collars. As for the girls, I believe they always think a good deal of a pretty hat, but I may be mistaken.

Now, I do not understand Jesus to say that pretty clothes are wrong. He says distinctly that we do need them, and of course we cannot do without them for warmth and decency. Some people have thought that He meant us not to have anything beautiful, but if that was so, why did He tell us to study the flowers?

If we look closer at what He actually said, I think we shall see that He is telling us that we are going the wrong way to work to be beautiful. And between you and me, I think myself that the people who are most dressed up are not generally the nicest to look at.

The first thing that strikes me about the flowers is that the beauty is in themselves. It is not something hung upon them. That is true of us, too. Much more depends on

the person who wears the clothes than on the clothes that are worn. If you have a dirty face and untidy nails, or if you stoop and slouch, the finer your clothes the more ridiculous you will appear.

A little while back, I was in a city that had decorated itself with banners and flags along the streets, while the houses and public buildings were draped and festooned with coloured stuffs. Some of them had fine displays of flowers in boxes on all the windowsills, and these looked really pretty. The King of England was coming to see this great town, and it was all in his honour. But in the paper the next day I read that perhaps the best effect was obtained by a great railway station, which had simply had all the grime and dirt washed off its face and a few flowers placed here and there.

That, I think, is something of what Jesus meant when He said that the body is more than the raiment. A clean, fresh, healthy, upright body that moves gracefully will look well in very simple clothing, and nothing else will give so good an effect.

But whether or not you are clean, fresh, healthy and graceful depends upon your *habits*. That is, what you are in yourself, and how you generally behave. Of course,

some people, such as engine-drivers or colliers, have to do work that makes their hands and faces dirty while they are at it, but you will find that the best of these always clean themselves up as soon as they are able, after their work is done. That is not the dirt that matters ; it is honourable in its place and time. It does matter when boys and girls make a fuss about washing their faces and making themselves tidy, because that shows they do not mind making other people uncomfortable by their unpleasantness.

Of all the parts of the body, the face is the one that has most to do with making people really nice-looking or otherwise. That is because the face comes to show so much what we are. We do not all start with beautiful faces ; in fact, some of us are quite plain. But as the years go on, it is not so much the colour of the eyes and the shape of the nose that affect people ; it is *the expression*.

A friend of mine who is an artist once painted the portrait of an elderly gentleman who had come to be mayor of his city. Of course there were the robes that mayors wear upon state occasions, but while these add colour which helps in its way, they do not

make a good picture by themselves. The remarkable thing about this portrait was that people who knew the mayor when he was quite young, and not at all handsome in feature, were surprised to find how good-looking he had come to be. He had been growing so for a long time, but they noticed it first when the artist painted the picture, at which they looked with attention.

The reason of this was that he had always been true and kind, and somebody said that perhaps he was all the better looking now because he had started without anything to be vain about. I think that was very true. A good many boys and girls either are, or think they are, better-looking than others, and put on airs until the lines of conceit grow in their faces and they become not at all nice to look at. There are other lines which come in to spoil our looks ; lines of ill-temper, of greed, of cunning and other ugly things.

Now all these come from thinking about ourselves, which the flowers never do. They grow by simply attending to their present business, and God clothes them with a beauty that gives us joy, but which they know nothing about themselves. So it is with men and women. The lines that come as the years go on and make the faces

pleasant to look at are all of them the consequence of caring for the things that really matter; none can put them in on purpose. If you care about others, if you are true, if you are faithful, if you are brave, if you are persevering, it will all shape your face with a beauty and strength you could not possibly imitate. God does it for you.

But once a girl, who had noticed this, said, "What a pity it is that we do not know when we are most beautiful, and that when we are conscious of it, it spoils it all."

That is not a pity at all. If we have beauty it is not for ourselves, but for others to look at. Our own eyes can look at all the other beautiful people, just as they look at the flowers. It is part of God's goodness to us that there is no limit to the number of other people to make us glad with their beauty, but there is only one of ourselves, and we need a looking-glass to see that one. It would be a nuisance to carry this about with us always, and it would interfere sadly with all that we want to do, if we kept admiring ourselves in it. We should probably get run over as we crossed the street. But we can enjoy the other things and people as we go about without trouble.

Of course, in this world, our clothes will

always be made up of different kinds of material that we do not provide ourselves, but get from plants or animals. Perhaps in the next world it may not be so. I do not know anything about it myself, but some time back there lived a remarkable man named Swedenborg, who believed that he was allowed to go into the spirit world and see things there. He said that clothes in that world took shape and colour from the thoughts and desires of the people themselves! Now, I wonder how you would like that? I am afraid some of us would be like the chameleon, who changes his colour so frequently. When you were in a temper, your clothing might be a violent red, and all flying about. When you were sulky, it might be a dull slate colour, and when you were jealous, an ugly green. Then, how patchy some of our clothes would be!

Well, as I say, I do not know about it myself, but I can see that even in this world our beauty of expression, and to a large extent the kind of clothes we choose and the manner of our wearing them, do show very largely what we are ourselves. So we shall do well to follow the advice Jesus gives, and pay the most attention to

being what we ought to be. The best way to do that is to forget about ourselves, and give all our attention to being loving, true and helpful of others, as He wants to make us.

XIII

THE SWORD OF BRENNUS

“With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged : and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you.”—MATT. vii. 2.

LONG before the Romans became masters of the world as they knew it, and founded the great Roman Empire, there was a time when it seemed likely that their city was destroyed for ever. A great army of Gauls, under their leader Brennus, had beaten their soldiers and burnt the town. A number of the Romans had held a stronghold called the Capitol for some time, but at last they were starved out, and had to surrender to the conqueror and accept his terms. These were that the Gauls should have given to them as much gold as would weigh a thousand pounds. Then they would give the Romans peace and march away back to their own land.

This was a terribly large amount of gold for them to find, but they gathered it in

somehow. For a long while after I expect the women had to do without gold ornaments, and the men without gold cups. Now they were sad and dejected, wondering how they could ever manage to build their city again, and whether it would not be better to join with some of their friends in another place.

The great scales were brought out, and the weighing was going on, when their leader noticed that it seemed to take more gold than usual to weigh a pound, and he told Brennus that the weights the Gauls were using were not fair. But Brennus did not care to see whether they were just or not. Instead, he threw his sword among the weights to make them heavier still, telling the Romans that it was always bad for conquered people.

That is true. Wars do not settle what is right, but only which side can fight best, and the conquerors are generally unjust to those they have beaten. Jesus said that those who take to the sword perish by the sword, and as it happened, Brennus himself did not have to wait long to find that out. As he was marching home from Rome, he was beaten in his turn in a battle, and most of the Gauls were killed.

Unfortunately, it is not only in war that

unjust weights and measures are used. The Romans had a proverb, "Let the buyer take care he is not cheated," and the prophets and teachers of the Jews had to keep on telling them that false weights were an abomination to God. To-day we have to keep a number of inspectors going round to see that dishonest people do not have false bottoms to their measures or bits taken out of their weights. If I were an inspector of weights and measures I should be glad to think that I was on God's business, and that it is a part of true religion to see that the poor people get as much as they pay for. But it is very sad that people need as much watching as all that.

But while it is good to know that God cares about our buying and selling, we must not forget that Jesus wants us to be careful about our just weighing and measuring in the other things that cannot be bought and sold over shop counters.

All judging, whether of people or their actions, is a kind of weighing or measuring, and the weights we use are not of metal, but our own ideas and opinions. And after we have judged the people, we are very fond of measuring out blame, and sometimes what we call punishment.

Now I think that boys and girls generally mean to be just in all this. At any rate, they are often heard to declare that this or that "isn't fair," and nothing seems to hurt them like injustice. They can stand strictness, though they do not always like it, but the strictness must be just. I expect most of you have heard of the schoolboy at Harrow, when Dr. Temple was head master. He said, in the way that schoolboys have, "Temple is a beast, but *he is a just beast.*" Of course, he meant that the master would not let the boys do as they liked, and was stern, but he was always fair.

But while you make so much of being fair, are you sure that you are fair yourselves? Or are the weights you use in your minds just a little inclined to favour yourselves? I am afraid you cry out about injustice to yourselves much more often than you do with regard to other people. "It isn't fair" very often means, "I am not getting the things I want." When the game is going against you, sometimes you are too ready to declare that some one else has cheated. Now, that is not "playing the game."

Jesus says that it is better not to judge others, because it is so difficult for us to

weigh all the circumstances. If we were quite sure we could see clearly, it might be different, but most of us blame others for little things, when all the time there is something very wrong with ourselves.

Some time ago there was a boy called John Dalton. One day he astonished his playmates by saying, "How blue those cherries are." They laughed at him, but for some time he persisted that they were blue. But afterwards he found out that it was his eyes that were wrong. He was what is now called "colour-blind." John Dalton was wise enough to recognize his mistake, and went on to discover that quite a number of people are unable to see more than one or two colours, though, as they have never seen more, they do not know it. It would be a good thing if we were all as wise to acknowledge that we may be mistaken.

Nowadays, all people who have to distinguish colours, like the engine-drivers who have to notice at night whether the signal lamps are red or green, are made to pass a stiff examination before they are trusted to do work that might endanger other people's lives if a mistake was made. There might be a terrible accident if a train ran past a

signal at danger because the driver thought he saw green instead of red.

But the judgments we make may often do a very great hurt to people's hearts and characters, if it does not damage their bodies. So be careful how you judge others.

Then, too, Jesus reminds us that we shall be judged in the same way as we judge others. In fact, we judge ourselves. Have you ever heard a whole class laugh at a boy or girl who has given an answer they did not think could be right? They have thought, "What a silly," and their laugh has said it. But sometimes it has turned out to be quite right, and then their laugh has judged themselves to be ignorant.

When you are harsh in your treatment of others, you must not be surprised if you are treated harshly in your turn. "As ye mete," that is, measure, "it shall be measured unto you." Even in the world, people are inclined to be kind to those who are kind, and severe to those who are severe. Even bad folk often feel it is a shame to cheat a really good man, but they like "to get their own back," as they say, from one who has been a little too sharp with them.

A man died, and instead of leaving his property to his son, he had made a will leaving it to some other people, asking them to give the son "whatever part pleased them." As they did not seem inclined to give any at all, the son took them before the judge, who asked them what they proposed to do. They said, "We will give him a tenth part." Then the judge said, "Take the tenth part yourselves and give him the nine-tenths; for the will says he is to have "whatever part *pleases you*." Of course, that was not what the man meant, but if they had been more generous, they would not have had a judgment like that given against them.

But the most important thing is that God Himself can only give to us as we are in the habit of giving to other people. It is very hard to be generous to a mean man, for he will not let you. I mean that he cannot take generosity. He only thinks you are a fool, so he does not get any good out of it. You have to be content with being generous yourself, though it would be so much nicer if you could do the other one some real good. So of course, God is always generous and loving, but mean people cannot let His love come right into their hearts. God would like

to bring them right home, but they cannot be at home with Him. But generous, open-hearted people can take in His love, and their hearts grow larger still, and He fills them more and more.

XIV

APRIL FOOLS

“ Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”—
MATT. vii. 7.

A good many old customs seem to be dying out. The postman does not bring to my children on February 14 the valentines he used to bring to us as children many years ago. I think that the First of April also is not now used to play tricks upon people as it was, though it may be that I have become a rather terrible person, and not at all the kind to try that sort of thing upon !

You may be wondering what the making of April fools has to do with asking and receiving. Well, there are two old tricks which I think will help me to make some things clear to you.

One was that a boy or girl would be sent into a shop to ask for some *pigeon's milk*. It

sounds quite simple until the person in the shop is either angry, thinking that you are trying to poke fun at him, or else laughs at you for a simpleton, because there is not any such thing. You can get milk from cows or goats, but not from birds.

Now, a good many people are foolish in just the same way when they ask things from God. It is not milk they want, but happiness, and they ask for that, but they will ask also that it shall come to them from things that will not give them happiness. In fact, sometimes they just go for the thing and forget that it is really the happiness they want. What they are asking is something like this. "Lord, make me happy by giving me riches." But plenty of people have had riches, and have been quite miserable. Happiness does not come from the things you have, but from the kind of boy or girl, man or woman that you are, and if you are the right kind of person you will be happy, though you are not rich. I have known poor people who could enjoy themselves very much more than a great many of those with lots of money.

The other trick was again to send some simple-minded child to ask for a penny-worth of *strap-oil*, and they generally sent

him into a shop where the man had a bad temper, and would perhaps give him a taste of the strap itself. Older folk are often quite as foolish. They ask for something they do not understand, which actually hurts them if they get it.

So the first thing I want you to see is that asking is not such an easy matter as you may have thought. It takes some learning to ask properly, and to begin with you should know just what it is you really do want, and you should be quite sure that you are asking for that and not something quite different. That is why so many people think that they have proved Jesus to be mistaken, because they have done quite a lot of asking, but there does not seem to have been much receiving.

I think all the nations have had stories about a magic ring, or stone, or something of the kind, which would give the holder the power of getting what he wished for, but they always show how the wishes have turned out badly, unless the greatest care was used in the asking. One I remember was that of a man who wished for many thousands of pieces of money immediately. They came at once in a heavy kind of rain, which beat him to the ground and buried him. It is a

great blessing that you are not always taken at your word in all the wishes you utter. I have heard a girl, who had become very impatient with her tangled hair, say, "Oh, bother! I wish I hadn't any hair at all." She would not have liked it if she had been made quite bald. Yet I expect you have said a good many things like that.

Of course, you are not usually in a bad temper when you pray, but there are such things as greediness, pride and other foolishnesses which make us very glad after a time that God does not pay attention to our foolish asking, unless we need to learn a lesson very badly. Then sometimes we get what we asked for, and soon wish we had not.

The next thing is that you must really mean it when you ask. You must be wholehearted about it. There was a lady who at first had no need to work, but afterwards lost all her money, and had to set about earning her living, which she did by selling muffins. Now, there is nothing at all disgraceful about that. On the contrary, the real disgrace is not to do useful and helpful things, whether you are rich or not. But this poor lady had been brought up to think that it was not respectable to go round selling things. So, as she walked along, she

would cry, in a very hushed kind of voice, "Muffins and crumpets!" and then would exclaim, "Oh, I do hope that nobody hears me."

You cannot expect to get things if you are only half-hearted about it. That is why Jesus goes on to say, "Seek, and ye shall find." We know a good deal about electricity now, although there is a very great deal more that we do not. It is not so very long ago, however, that people were quite ignorant that the lightning was really electricity. Benjamin Franklin wanted to know. He did not sit still and say, "Won't somebody tell me?" He asked Nature by seeking till he found out. First he tried to get a long rod reaching up into the sky, just as now they put lightning rods to spires, so that the electricity can run easily down them into the ground without doing mischief. But it was some time before that gave any answer, so he tried another way. He sent up a kite right into a thunder cloud, and when the string got wet he found he could get sparks from it. Water conducts the electricity as well as metal. Then he had his answer. He had sought and found. Now, people keep on seeking all kinds of knowledge about matters like this; they

are in earnest, and they find what they want to know. Of course, the answer is waiting all the time ; it is not hidden, except by our own foolishness and ignorance. The lighting had been showing men what it could do and how it behaved as long as men have been men, but it was only when Franklin really wanted to know and sought earnestly that he got the answer.

If we only sought for the things God is waiting to give us with the same earnestness, we should have them. I do not think anyone who has sincerely asked for the real things, truthfulness, purity, love and the rest, has failed to get them.

And we must keep at it. The knocking must be as if we quite meant to come in. It is of no use giving what I may call just a runaway knock. So many people give up before they have truly shown that they meant it. The world is full of instances in which people have failed because they did not keep on long enough, though the thing they were striving for was almost won. Have you seen those machines in which you put a penny and see how strong your grip is ? Once I tried one of them. I put the penny in the slot, and gripped hard. It seemed as if I could not quite manage it,

but just at the last I gave a little more grip, and—out came three pennies! That meant that two people before me had almost got their pennies through, so that they did not slip down among the rest when they gave up, but there was needed just a wee bit of extra grip to bring them right along. So they stood just on the verge until my penny came and brought them through with it.

But the best stories are always those that Jesus tells Himself. Do you remember about the poor widow? There was a judge in a city, whose business was to see that justice was done. But he did not care about doing it because it was God's justice, and he did not care either what men said about him. I expect, like all judges of that kind, he wanted men to give him money, and of course this poor widow had none. That was the trouble; some one had cheated her out of it. But she kept coming to him, and would not be discouraged. So at last he got tired of it, and gave her justice, only in order to stop her troubling. Now, said Jesus, if you can make a man like that give you justice by sticking to him till he does, do you not see that you are certain of getting it from God, who wants to give it to you, and

is only waiting till you care enough about it to make it worth your having ?

So make sure what it is you should ask for, and then keep on seeking and knocking until you get it, for so it is sure to come ; f not quite as you imagined it, then better still, because God knows better than you do.

XV

THE GOLDEN RULE

"All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them : for this is the law and the prophets."—MATT. vii. 12.

WHEN a little boy came home from school, to which he had gone that day for the first time, he was a bit downhearted. "Mother," he said, "the teacher read out such a lot of rules we have to keep, I am sure I shall never remember them all." It does seem like that very often, does it not? Even when we learn a new game, the rules or directions generally puzzle us at first by their number, and it seems very complicated. Then at every park gate there are boards with a terrible lot of "byelaws," and when we think about all the laws there are against doing so very many things, it sometimes appears very hard to avoid doing something wrong.

Fortunately for us, the laws which have

to be made about all the things that must not be done are mostly concerned with the people who do not want to do the right thing. It is much simpler for those who do. If you want to be honest, you need not bother about all the distinctions between burglary, house-breaking, larceny, embezzlement, and so on. It is much simpler to be fair to a man than to try to puzzle out some way of cheating him which the law has forgotten to forbid.

So Jesus gives here a simple direction by which we can be pretty sure to do the right thing if we really want to. It is generally called the Golden Rule. I am sure it should be called "golden," because it is the finest that any one has ever given, and it is worth noticing that when the best men in other nations and at other times have tried to "put it in a nutshell," as we say, they have got very near to what Jesus Himself said. But I should like another word instead of "Rule," if I could find it, because to so many people that means something that will save you the trouble of thinking.

Now, while this is very simple, all your thinking and the best of your heart and imagination are needed to carry it out properly. The simplest things are not the

easiest. If your father plays golf, ask him whether that very simple game of just knocking a ball into one hole after another is easy !

If you are giving presents, for example, it does not do always to give the things you like yourself ; the other person may not like them. You must put yourself in their place, and so find out what is really useful and pleasant to them, because that is what you would like people to do about their present to you. You would not like mother to give you a new pair of curtains for your birthday, just because that is what she would most like as a gift for herself.

Nor is it the best thing always to do what the other person wishes you to do. That would lead to great disorder, for all the people who want to do the wrong things would at once say, " Oh, I just want you to leave me alone, while I go about stealing, cheating, ill-treating others just as I like." For one thing, that would not be dealing with the people who were robbed or ill-treated as we should like them to deal with us. For another, it would not be really good for the cheats and violent people themselves.

Once a man tried to persuade me that because I was a Christian I ought to give

him money when he asked me. But I knew that that particular man would at once go and spend the money on drink. So I told him that I should not really be *giving* to him, but taking away his health and character more still. We have to use our thinking and imagination to see what the *result* of our action is going to be. Again, what we truly want others to do for us is not so much any particular thing that we wish for strongly, but perhaps mistakenly, but *the best*.

There is a very fine old story which the Greeks used to tell about a man called Ulysses. He had been at the famous war between the Greeks and Trojans, and after the war he met with a number of wonderful adventures before reaching home. At one time, in his ship with his men, he had to pass close to a shore on which some sirens lived. These were beings with faces like those of beautiful women, and voices that were so lovely that when they sang, those that heard forgot all their common sense and went to the sirens as fast as they could. But these were really horrible creatures with great claws, who ate the people they charmed to come to them. Ulysses knew this, so he filled up the ears of all the men in order that

they should hear nothing at all as they rowed past. He thought, however, that it would be dangerous for him, as captain, not to be able to hear anything, so his ears were not stopped. All the same, he knew that when he heard the singing he would forget everything else and plunge into the sea to swim to the sirens. So he had himself lashed with ropes to the mast, and gave orders to the men that no matter what he might want them to do when they were within sound of that shore, they were on no account to let him loose until they had got quite clear away.

It all happened as he expected. The men, who could not hear, rowed stolidly on; but Ulysses, when they came close so that he heard the singing, had a kind of madness and wanted to get to those sirens. He made frantic signs to the men to unlash him from the mast and let him go, but they remembered what he had said when in his right mind, and just rowed on. Then, when in spite of his storming and raving, they got away from the danger, and the maddening music was no longer heard, Ulysses came to himself, and thanked the men for doing what his true self wanted, and not what he had wished when he had no self-control.

So it is with us. We really want the best thing done for us by those who are wiser and better, and therefore if we are to do to others as we want them to do to us, we must always try our best to discover what really is the helpful thing. Of course, we must be sure that we are wiser, if we think we have to do things which others do not like at the time. For boys and girls it might be rather priggish to do too much of this. All you need do is to be sure that in being pleasant and helpful to others you are not doing wrong things. If your father says he wants to be quiet, you need not begin to argue that it might be better for him to have a cheerful noise going on! It is a safe rule to let people settle their own business until they want you to do something that is clearly wrong.

I have tried to point out to you why sometimes the thing you wish for is not the best, so that you may understand that other people may be keeping the Golden Rule towards you, even though you would like something else. And we all have to remember that God Himself is keeping it towards us, though at times we think He is letting things go very hard for us.

A man was walking in the country once

with his boy, when they came to a stream. The boy wanted to jump over, so got a light pole and attempted the leap. But the pole was too slight, and when he put the end into the stream and sprang into the air, it broke, and he came souse into the water. Some one who saw it blamed the father for not seeing that the boy had a strong enough pole. But the man said, "I was more concerned that he should learn to judge these things for himself than to save him a wetting." I think God is more concerned for us in the same way.

Our business is just to do the best we can for each other. Think of a house in which every one is trying to do this. How happy it is, even though they do make mistakes sometimes! Now think of a house in which every one is thinking of himself only. If you have the misfortune to know such a house, you will see at once what Jesus means by this Golden Rule.

Now suppose that we could get the whole world to be a big family in which we were all doing the best we knew for each other. Nothing would stop more thoroughly the lying, cheating, robbing, murdering, and all the other horrible things. We should soon put an end to the starving and the misery of

all kinds. It is a great pity that all people will not do as Jesus says, but we can begin to do our share, can we not? If it seems not to make much difference to the great world, it will make very much to our own homes, and that is our first business. God is looking after the world; if we do our part, He will do His.

XVI

THE GATE AND THE PATH

“Enter ye in by the narrow gate : for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many be they that enter in thereby. For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few be they that find it.”—MATT. vii. 13, 14.

HAVE you noticed that Jesus would not answer all the questions that were put to Him? He would not tell Peter what was going to happen to John. He refused to tell the disciples anything about “times and seasons” that were God’s business and not theirs. And when a man asked Him whether there were few who would be saved, He said nothing about what would happen in the end, but told him what to do now. “Strive to enter by the narrow door.”

He did say that not many were entering the narrow way that leads to life, and any one can see that that is true with their

own eyes. To enter into life is to become more really alive. It is easy to become more dead, to lose power, to lose hope, to lose courage, to lose truthfulness, to lose purity, to lose love, and all that belongs to life that is really life. The thing for you and me is to find the way that leads to more and more of these until we have left all the deadness behind, and are at home with God.

Now, when we have anywhere to go, the great thing is to know where we are going and how to start. So many people do not know quite where they want to go. They just want to have an easy time, and they jog along anyhow. Well, Jesus says there is plenty of space for that; it is a broad way. But it means that your life rusts away; it is destruction. Others know what they want. They want to get rich, or to be famous, or to order other people about. Well, very likely they will get there. There are many ways of getting rich, or climbing to power, or making your name well known. But it often happens that you have to give up your kindness, your truthfulness, your justice, or some other power of life to do it. That is destruction. These things may be good, but only if they happen to come in the one way that leads to life.

Suppose you and I want to go that way. The first thing is to make a start. It is not always easy to see just how to do that. A man was taking a holiday in Ireland once, and wanted to make his way to some place; I have forgotten the name; Bally-something-or-other. So he asked an Irishman who came along if he could tell him how to get there. "Sure, of course I can," he said. "Let me see, you'll just be going along to—No, you'd better go as far as—Well, well, perhaps, maybe, it would be best after all to get to—Oh, sure, and if it was myself that was going to Bally-something-or-other, it's not from here I'd be starting, at all."

But you see, each one of us must start from where he is, and it is only the way that starts from there that will serve us. I have told you that story that you may understand this, and also that it is very difficult for any one else to find it for us. A great deal of trouble has come from men trying to make other people start from where they are themselves. That is the cause of so many of the terrible things called persecutions. People have said, "You must think exactly as I think, and say just what I say, or you cannot be saved." But no one can think or speak for you, and I am glad that

we are beginning to understand that now. Jesus wants us to mind our own business, and start ourselves from where we are. The only thing we have any right to do for other people is to help them where we can, not to force them into our way.

Once you have understood that, you will find the narrow gate through which *you* must pass to get on to the road that leads to life. Perhaps you think it is hard that it is a narrow one, but it is not God's fault that it is narrow. Each of us has made it narrow for ourselves, for it is *ourself*. It is the gate of self that has shut us off from God, and the first thing is to open it and go right through, leaving it behind us. Jesus said, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself." I have told you that that does not mean to find out ways of making ourselves miserable, but to give up self as our lord and master. We must stop planning things for ourselves, stop calling things good or bad according to whether we happen to like them or not. This means finding another Lord, and measuring things by His will instead of our own. It is a turning round, a complete change, this getting out of ourselves, so it is sometimes said that the narrow gate is that of repent-

ance. Anyhow, we have to get out of ourselves.

Another reason why I say that the narrow gate is our own self is that it is exactly our own shape and size. The gate into God's Kingdom will not let anything else through. You remember that Jesus told that rich young man that he could not get through if he insisted on carrying his money with him. It is not always money we have to drop; it may be anything that makes us unwilling to go to God just as we are. There was a man went to a doctor to know how to get life for his body; we call it health, generally. The doctor said, "You are drinking a good deal, are you not?" "Yes," said he man. "Well, you must drop that," said the doctor." The man wanted to get well, but he wanted more to go on drinking, and he would not give it up. The consequence was that he did not get through the gate that leads to health. He could not take the bottles through with him. It is like that with the life of the spirit. We must be content to give up everything and go through just ourselves only. God has plenty of things on the other side, if they are necessary for us.

There are, as you know, always two sides

to anything. The way out is also the way in. It is like that with the gate to the way of life. From one side it is called self, and looks narrow. The other side, when we have gone through, is called by a much better name, that of Christ Himself, and we see that it is large enough for everything that is good and worth while. To deny oneself is to confess Jesus as Lord.

But still the way looks "straitened" as we go. That is, it seems narrow. Have you read that fine story of the pilot, Hervé Riel, which Robert Browning has told in a splendid poem? There was once a big sea-fight between the ships of England and those of France, and the French ships, all that were left after the battle, needed to get into harbour away from the fleet that was pursuing them. But when they got some pilots from shore, they declared it impossible to take those big war-vessels in; the way was so narrow. But a sailor, Hervé Riel, stood up and said they were all wrong. He knew the channel well, and could take the whole fleet past all the rocks and shoals right up the river mouth to the place where they would be in safety. You know that one always needs a pilot to find the channel, for although there is a broad

sheet of water to look at, the stream winds about, and there are banks of mud in some places and rocks in others. Well, Hervé Riel took the biggest ship, made the others follow exactly in its wake, and got them all through without any of them touching the ground. There they were, safe from the English ships, for these did not know the way.

It is like that in the things we have to do. There are any number of ways of doing the wrong thing. You can make mistakes in your sum to any extent, but there is only one thing that is right. There are ever so many lies that people can tell, but there is only one truth. There are ever so many diseases to be had, but health is just one thing. So it seems as if the way of truth and health were very narrow, while the way of falsehood and of disease is very wide. But when you know the one truth, and have the one simple health, you find that these are the real things; they are bigger and grander than all the lies, and all the ways of getting ill, for these only lead to destruction.

Now, Jesus says that He is the Way. If you have rightly gone through that gate of changing your self for Him as Lord, you

will go on trying to find exactly the one thing that He would have done, instead of the many ways in which it looks as if you might please yourself. But that one thing will make you stronger, wiser, more loving for the next step, so that at last you will come to the fullness of life; you will be altogether a true child of God.

XVII

THE TWO TREES

"Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit."—
MATT. vii. 17.

IN the houses in which the more fortunate boys and girls live there is often found at Christmas a wonderful tree with many pretty and useful things on its branches, as if they were its fruit. Gold and silver balls shine in the light of many candles, gaily-coloured little flags wave in the air as people pass by, and toys, games and sometimes very useful things hang from it and cluster about it. It is a very pleasing custom, and very likely you get quite excited with happiness as you dance round and receive your gifts.

But, of course, these things do not really grow on the tree. People have tied them on with thread, using the tree for a kind of play for us, and we are very glad that they do. We do not need to have a living

tree for it at all, because it would be quite easy to make one artificially. The reason why we do not is only because they grow more cheaply than they could be made, and do just as well.

But looking out of my window, as I think about this talk with you, I can see a tree with a number of apples on it. Nobody hung those apples there. There is no suspicion of string about it. I watched the tree put forth the buds; then after a little the beautiful blossom came out; and when that faded and fell off, the little apples were seen, quite tiny at first, but growing larger as the tree drank up the rain and used the wonderful sunlight to give it power to make those apples out of itself.

Now, Jesus tells us about trees to make us understand more about ourselves. Some people are like the Christmas tree. What they do and say seems very good, but it is all *put on*. It has not come from themselves. Very often they are only pretending, in order to deceive others. I do not mean the playing at being something that you are not. There is nothing wrong about that. Indeed, Jesus liked to watch the boys and girls pretending to be brides and bridegrooms. A good pretend play is very good

fun, and quite healthy. I mean the people who pretend to be different from what they really are in order to get something for themselves which they would not if they were to show themselves for what they are.

There is a great poet named Robert Browning, whom some people find very difficult to read, but he wrote some things that are quite simple. One of these is the story of a priest whose father was a fisherman, and who always kept a fishing-net in his room to remind him of his lowly birth, so people chose him for one place after another. They thought he was so humble that they could not do wrong at last in choosing him for the very highest place of all. But after that the net was put away. No one saw it any more. At last, some one was bold enough to ask him why it was no longer kept for him and every one to see, and the priest, now become the great Pope, answered, "*Son, it has caught the fish.*"

Jesus called people like that, who pretended to do and say good things when they were not really good themselves, hypocrites, and the severest things He ever said were about them.

But without being hypocrites, we may

find that we are not able to do or say much that really is good. We do not seem to be bringing forth fruit. There must be something wrong at the heart of us. If you ask any one who knows about trees, he will tell you that if a tree has not a healthy flow of sap inside, it cannot bear fruit. There are many things that may hinder this.

Some time ago a friend of mine had an old pear tree in his garden. It had had no fruit for some years, so they thought that it had become too old, and they used it as if it were just a stump and no more. They always tied the clothes' line to it when they hung out the washing to dry, and it did very well for that. But one day, when there were many clothes on the line, a great wind sprang up suddenly; it filled those clothes like the sails of a boat, and gave that tree a tremendous shaking. Nothing happened immediately, but when the time came, that tree put out its buds again, and for some years after that it gave good crops of pears. My friend said that this great shaking must have loosened its roots, which had become too fixed and cramped in the hard ground.

Sometimes it is good for us to have a good shaking up. It is not pleasant at the

time. Perhaps you have been a bit careless and lazy, or conceited or something else that has hindered you from doing really good work. Then there has been a summons to go to the room of your master or mistress, from which you have come out feeling very small indeed, and wondering how you are ever to hold up your head again. But that has passed off, and you have been quite different. It has, as we say, "done you a world of good."

That is one reason, I believe, why God sometimes lets things come that seem terrible. A long time ago, in England, there was a great plague of the dreadful disease called cholera. Many thousands died from it, and probably very many more from being frightened. But it made a great change for good in the way in which people lived. Before that they had been very careless about keeping the towns and villages clean. They had no idea that this disease came from their own dirty ways, especially from letting nasty things get into the drinking water. Some of the doctors had been trying for a long time to teach them better, but they would not listen. They even said that God sent these plagues, and thought that it was almost wicked to

try to prevent them. After the cholera had come, however, they were so shaken up that they were careful about the water, and now the people whose business it is take very great pains to keep the towns and villages clean and therefore healthy.

That reminds me that Jesus is not talking about fruit only, but about good fruit. In its own way the cholera was the fruit of filthy habits, just as health is the fruit of clean living. So lies are the fruit that comes out of a false heart, and murder the fruit of anger and hatred. A poisonous tree bears poisonous fruit, just as the orange tree bears oranges that are good for us to eat.

So the great thing for us is to be right *at heart*. Perhaps you have wondered at those words of Jesus in which He said that while the law brought to judgment one who killed another, really every one who was angry with his brother was in danger of the same judgment. But if there is hatred in your heart, it is like poisonous sap that makes the fruit poisonous. You can see that a man who tries to kill is just as bad as one who succeeds in doing it. If you are afraid to try, that does not make you better. Maybe you are worse, because you are a coward as well. And all your thoughts and

words will be poisonous through the hate, and though you do not kill the body, you may kill some part that is more valuable still. Anyhow, *you* are a hater, and the only thing for you is to be changed in heart so that you do not hate.

That seems very difficult, does it not? So it is, for ourselves. It is almost like expecting a thistle to be changed into a fig tree. Many people give it up. I have heard some of them say it is what they call their "temperament," and they cannot change it. But it is just this change that Jesus came to make for all who would let Him, and He will do it for you too. But you must remember it is your *heart* that you must let Him have. I do not mean that what you do or say does not matter. It matters a very great deal. It matters to other people, and it matters to you, because trying to do and say the true and loving things is at any rate letting the better part of your heart do its best. But if Jesus makes your whole heart what it ought to be, you will have no trouble about the doing and saying. That will all come as naturally as the apples are coming on the tree in my garden. As Jesus said, "A sound tree must produce sound fruit."

XVIII

THE MAID WHO BARRED THE DOOR

"He that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much."—LUKE xvi. 10.

Boys and girls, or at least very many of them, often dream of becoming famous. I know I used to do so. Generally it was by doing something brave, and I longed for an opportunity to be a hero. I would dream about a house on fire, a white-robed figure at an upper window, a slender lad climbing a steep ladder through the smoke and flame, and then bearing that fainting girl to safety amid the admiring plaudits of the crowd.

That is how it would be described in the papers the next day, and I was to be that slender lad. If there could not be a burning house, a drowning boy would do, or a runaway horse, or anything which would give me a chance. Somehow it did not strike me how very unpleasant it would be for the other people concerned.

Anyhow, that opportunity never came, or if it did, I did not know it. Once I was very nearly the drowning boy myself, but that was quite another story.

That is why I am so glad of the things Jesus says about being faithful; that He lays such stress on its importance, and says that the faithful will enter into the joy of their Lord. We cannot all be great or clever, and we cannot all be heroes in the usual sense, but we can all be faithful. Jesus came to save everybody, not only a few, so He asks of us what everybody can do, if they will.

Some people are foolish enough to imagine that what everybody can do must be of less value than what only a few can do, but that is not always true. They all have their own value. It is good that we should have great artists, great musicians, great poets, great engineers, and indeed all kinds of people who can do some things particularly well, and we only want some of each kind. If everybody did all the same things, they would not have the value to us that they have now.

We like to have a great variety of flowers, and it would be monotonous if all were alike. But *all* flowers must have roots of

some kind. So I think that faithfulness is a kind of root that every one must have, and the different flowers will come from it.

It does not matter much if you cannot write a great poem, but it does matter very much if you are not faithful in what you have to do. Nothing goes wrong if you are not born clever, but if you do not keep your word, if you cannot be depended on for what has been entrusted to you, all kinds of mischief take place. Some of the common things have the highest value.

But faithfulness can be great and heroic, too, at times. Have you heard of Jean Barlass? That is a strange name, and the story tells how she got it.

It happened a long time ago in Scotland. Jean was maid to the Queen, at a time when there was a great deal of trouble, because the nobles were quarrelling with the King. Some of them were one day discovered to be coming with their soldiers to the palace, when the King and Queen had very few of their followers to defend them. There was very little time in which to get away, so they ran to the great door to bolt it, in order that the soldiers might be kept for

a time from following, until they could batter it down. But some one seems to have played them false, for the great wooden bar that slid between the sockets had been taken away. What were they to do?

Jean knew what to do at once, for she was thinking only of the King and Queen, not of herself. She put her own arm through the sockets in the place of the bar, and held it there, though it must have been terribly painful as the fierce blows were rained upon the door. At last her poor arm was broken, and the door burst open. But by that time the King and Queen had been taken by the other faithful ones far away. That, they say, was how she got the name Jean Barlass. Was it not great?

But really, faithfulness is always great, though the occasion may seem little. God has given us our own part to play; how much depends on it we cannot know. There is an old saying, "What's hit is history; what's missed is mystery." That is, we can never quite see what would have happened if we had done differently. So many people are content to be unfaithful in what seem to them little things, and think that it does not matter. But they may have stopped some of the best possible

things from happening. You know the old rhyme—

“For want of a nail the shoe was lost.
For want of a shoe the horse was lost.
For want of a horse the rider was lost.
For want of the rider the battle was lost.
For want of a victory the kingdom was lost.”

Here is a story which shows how a little unfaithfulness brought about a great loss. Once, at the very beginning of a battle, the commander-in-chief stationed a lieutenant with a battery of guns in a certain position, and told him, whatever happened, not to move from there until he had orders from the commander-in-chief himself. All the morning the battle went on, but this officer had nothing to do; he could hear the noise of the fighting, but it did not come his way. He got very tired of waiting, and as the afternoon passed on in the same way, he thought he was forgotten. You see, he was not of high rank, and it was only a few guns and men that he had under him. At last a messenger came galloping up, calling him to go to another part of the field, for one of the generals needed the help of the guns badly. “Was the order from the commander-in-chief?” he asked. “No, but the case was urgent; he could not

refuse to go ; probably that was what he had been kept there for. He could not see his side lose because of an idea that he could do anything more important." So they pressed him, and at last he went, wishing he was quite sure that this was what the commander-in-chief would approve.

Very soon after he had left there came a message from the commander-in-chief himself, and *he was not there*. The commander had planned the whole battle, after studying all the ground and what was likely to happen, and this battery was to turn the scale at the critical moment. Because he had disobeyed, not understanding how important his little battery would be in the commander's plans, he put them all wrong just at the important time. Of course, it was not his business to understand. A general cannot possibly explain to every officer all that he intends ; it was the officer's business to have left that to the general, and simply to have been faithful.

You are not officers in the field, but it is quite possible that some of God's plans for the world are allowed to depend on your faithfulness. You know that every great man has been a small child some time or other, and has been in the charge, perhaps

of a sister, or a nursemaid. Well, those whom we know as great, of course were faithfully looked after, because as a matter of fact they lived to be great. But we know that a very large number of little ones fall into accidents, or get illnesses, which either cause them to die, or to lose some of their powers, and this is often through the carelessness of those who were set to mind them. How do you know what some of these might have done, if their sister or nursemaid had been quite faithful in all the little things ?

Now, Jesus says that those who are faithful in little things are also faithful in much. Of course all the little things that are happening every day make up a great deal in the end. But I think He also means that those who practise the little things are ready when the great occasions come. That is not true of everything. Sometimes people who are brave over little things run away from big ones, and curiously enough, some people who are brave in battle cannot face the dentist. But in faithfulness it is true.

So if you and I, who cannot paint big pictures, or be prime ministers, just do faithfully the little things given us to do every day, leaving all the rest to Him, some

THE MAID WHO BARRED THE DOOR 145

day we shall hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will set thee over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

XIX

THE SCHOOLBOY'S LETTER

“There is nothing covered up that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.”—LUKE xii. 2.

SEVENTEEN hundred years is a long time, is it not? Just about as far back as that a boy in Egypt wrote, probably from school, to his father. Schoolboys do not seem to have changed much through all those years, for I have seen some letters to-day that are very much like this one. It seems the boy's father had gone to Alexandria, which was then a very important and no doubt pleasant city, and young Theon, for that was his name, had wanted to go with him. He writes: “It was a fine thing of you not to take me with you to Alexandria!” Then, of course, he wants something sent to him, and promises to make a fuss if he does not get it. “If you don't, I won't eat, I won't drink! There

now!" He seems to have been rather a spoilt boy.

You wonder how I can possibly know this. Well, I have seen the letter, and if ever you are at the Bodleian Library at Oxford University you can see it for yourself. For centuries it was covered up with sand, buried with many other things, and at last it was dug up; so that now little Theon's letter, that he meant only for his father, is in a glass case where any one can read it.

Of course there are plenty of others that have been destroyed; more than we can think about. Jesus did not mean that material things would keep for ever and be found at last, because He knew all about "the moth and rust that corrupt," as well as the fire that burns and the damp that destroys. What He was concerned with were the things that we do, or say, or even think. These are the things that matter; paper and parchment, wood and stone, are only what we use to express them. He means that we cannot really hide from everybody for ever, nor keep the ugly things to ourselves.

As things are, I think it is part of God's kindness that things can be covered up for a

time, and that everybody does not have to know all about everybody else.

Some time ago I read a story in one of the magazines about a man who was shipwrecked and cast on an island. There were people there, but none of them answered when he spoke, though they seemed to understand what he said. At last there came an old man who spoke in a queer kind of voice, and explained that there the people were able to read what was in everybody's mind, so they did not need to talk, and had lost the use of their tongues. Only a few practised speaking, in case they met any one who had not this power. The traveller found this very awkward indeed. Fancy having every thought and every feeling known to all about you!

The fact is, it would not do us any good to know all about the others. We have no right to know, because we are all so imperfect, so selfish, and so wrong-headed and wrong-hearted in many ways, that we should make terrible mistakes. That is why it is wrong to be curious about other people's business, and unspeakably mean to try to find out what is in private letters and so on. When we have all learnt *to understand and to love*, we may be able to live in a world in which nothing is hidden from us.

You know, too, that some things are actually injured by the light. When a photographer takes your portrait, he has to keep the plate shut up in a dark slide, and to develop it in a dark room, and it is not until all is finished that that plate can be brought into the full light to be looked at by anybody. The image would be destroyed if the light got in before.

So God lets us keep our thoughts and feelings to ourselves through all this time of growing, until they can find expression in words for the other people to know.

But this time is not going to last for ever. There is no need for darkness in God's heaven. All is so beautiful and strong there that it can stand the fullest light. We have to draw down the blinds here sometimes, when the sun is very strong, because the colours in the carpet will fade. That is because our colours are faulty and weak ; if they are what is called " fast," the sunlight only makes them appear more beautiful.

So Jesus says that we must remember that, while we are allowed shade and darkness now, some day everything that we are, all that we have ever been, will be known. That is why He wants to make us clean and true, so that we shall not be so terribly

ashamed. As for the things that have been, I do not think we shall feel bad about the others knowing, because they too will all have the same story to tell, and the great thing will be that God has sent His Son to cleanse us all from it. It will be God's great love we shall think about, and there will be no poking of the finger at each other, as there would be if we got to know before we were made right ourselves.

But I want you to think of one very important thing. Even now it is true that nothing is altogether covered up or unknown. You can hide your thoughts and feelings, if you are clever, from all the other boys and girls, and even the grown men and women. You can sometimes hide up what you have done. But there are at least two who will know all about it.

Once a man tried to persuade another to do something which was very mean and bad, but which would bring in money, and as far as could be seen, no one else could possibly know of the meanness. But the man said, "Oh, yes, some one will. I shall know it myself, and God will know."

"*I shall know it myself.*" No one can cover that up. If you have told a lie, if you hold nasty thoughts in your mind, if

there is hatred or jealousy in your heart, you may hide it from others, but not from yourself. That is what hurts most, and is going to hurt more, if you do not get it all cleaned up.

And God knows. Perhaps that seems terrible too. As long as people like the bad things they cannot bear to think that it is all clear to God. They come to think of Him as a kind of big and terrible policeman, and it frightens them. There is this much that is true about it, too. As long as we go on doing bad acts, saying evil things, and hugging all kinds of horrid feelings, and thinking they are nice, God will not stop the consequences that are sure to come and to hurt us. If He did, He would not really be loving, for we should only get much worse in ourselves.

You see, if we put on blue spectacles, everything looks blue; if they are red, then we see things red. So, if we look at God with eyes that see horrid things as nice, and good as unpleasant, we shall see even God's love as a terrible thing.

But if we want to be made clean, true and loving, then it is a beautiful thing to know that nothing is covered up from God. We do not have to explain things to Him; He

knows. Even a wise doctor sometimes does not know just what is the matter with his patient, and so cannot cure him. But God will not leave any evil thing to make more trouble.

Even fathers and mothers misunderstand us sometimes ; they cannot see all that is in us, and it is so difficult for us to put it into words, isn't it ? But God knows all our trying to do right, and exactly what it was that hindered us. He knows how we came to make the mistake, and to be weak enough to do the wrong. It really is the most splendid thing in the whole world that nothing is covered up from God. We only see what things *look like to us*, but God sees things *exactly as they are*.

Some time ago there was a man who was cook to a monastery. They called him Brother Lawrence. He was not clever, even at cooking, and he found praying very difficult. He did not know how to put things to God, or even how to use the beautiful prayers that others had made. It was a great sorrow to him, until he woke up to understand that God was always with him, and knew all that he thought, felt and did. That made him happy, because he knew that God loved him, and he would go about his

work, preparing the vegetables or going to market, just reminding himself all the time that God was with him. Many people since have tried Brother Lawrence's plan of "practising the presence of God," as they call it. If you once understand that God loves you, and will let Him make you all that we mean by "good," you too will find that it is a great joy to feel that nothing is hidden from God.

XX

THE BEAN THAT WAS NOT SOWN

“Whosoever would save his life shall lose it : and whosoever shall lose his life for My sake shall find it.”—
MATT. xvi. 25.

GOING through the pigeon-holes in one of my cupboards some time back, I found a paper bag in which were a few beans. They had been left over from the year before, when all the others that had been in the bag had been sown. They were rather handsome-looking beans, with a good deal of red, purple and black about them. In the darkness they had kept apparently just as they had been. Nothing had broken that fine skin, and the store of food inside was just the same, except that perhaps it was a little drier. Perhaps you know that the greater part of the stuff inside a seed such as a bean is not the beginning of the plant itself. That is quite a small thing, and the rest is food for it in the early days, when it

is in the ground, before the plant has grown enough to get its nourishment from the air.

If we could imagine one of these beans being able to think things over, just as we do ourselves, it might have said something of this kind. "What a lucky fellow I was to be left in this bag. I have kept my beautiful shape and colour, and all my store of food is still safe inside. Now I have heard that those unfortunate beans that fall into the ground and get covered up are soon destroyed. The earth and the water stain them horribly, so that the colour is spoilt at once. All their precious store of food is used up in a few days, and the moisture makes them swell until they actually burst. What a horrible fate!"

That is quite true in fact, though perhaps after all the bean would be wrong in thinking it horrible. Let us see what else there is to say about the beans that were sown in the earth. Maybe, if they could know and feel also, it might seem to them too that they were losing everything that made them what they were; in fact, losing their life as beans altogether, while they were still underground. I do not know what a bean feels like when its inside is swelling and growing so large that its skin splits; when its form is changing so

much that it is no longer round and smooth, but little wriggly things are growing downwards out of it, and a white stalk pushing out of the top of its head, and all the time it is so hungry that the precious store of food it had been keeping so carefully is eaten up and vanishes.

But as soon as that white stalk gets through the earth into the air and the sunshine, it finds a life that the bean in the dark cupboard could know nothing about. It is turned a beautiful green by the action of the rays of the sun, and very soon graceful leaves unfold from the buds, and the stem grows on and on, always putting out more leaves and shoots, until it is a tall and handsome plant. Then more wonderful things still happen. There come some buds of another kind, which open out, not into leaves like the rest, but into attractive blossoms of red or white, with honey inside to which the bees come. These bees, going from flower to flower, carry from one to another on their bodies a fine kind of dust called pollen, and as this pollen falls on a delicate arrangement inside the flower of the bean, new life still is stirred, and a pod begins to grow, with little tiny beanlets inside. All these draw their food from the plant until

they are of full size, and then the business of the plant is finished. It has brought forth ever so many beans, instead of the single one it was, and its life is multiplied, instead of being destroyed.

Jesus put all this into a few words, only He spoke of a corn of wheat instead of a bean. "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it beareth much fruit." And He made us understand that this is one of God's laws of life that apply not only to plants, but to us. We can only get the life God means us to grow into by letting go what we have now. People who try hard to keep what they have got, lose all the beautiful life they might have, and cannot even stay as they are. Those beans of mine that had kept their skins and their store of food had already got a bit drier, and if they had been left they might have got so dry that they never could have broken out into the rich life of a plant that produced so many more beans. Or the mice might have eaten them.

Of course we do not lose and gain our bodily life in the same way. Jesus is speaking of that life in us which is so much higher than that of a bean. If you look at a Revised Version of the New Testament you

will see a note at the side which tells us that the word life might be "soul" instead. That is, not the body part of us at all, but the part that feels, is glad or sorrowful, wants things badly or dislikes them very much, and sometimes does a little of what it calls thinking. Now the idea we most of us have to begin with is that to get and keep what we like very much is life, and to lose it is death. But Jesus says that is not so, and really, if we open our eyes to look round at what happens to other people, we can see how right He is.

Not very long ago, the story came out of a man who was so lazy that he had not left his bed for very many years. There was nothing the matter with him. He just said he was not going to do any work. His wife had to keep him, though I think it was a pity she did. I suppose he thought he was having a fine time. He was not spending any strength; he was not taking any trouble. Perhaps he thought he was keeping his life from being exhausted. But, boys and girls who run and jump and tire yourselves out, would you call it life to stick in bed for twenty years, not seeing anything outside the room, with all the muscles of your legs and arms flabby, and your mind flabbier still? Of course you

would not. It is just the using up of the muscle you have that brings on the bigger muscle still. It is getting out of the narrow room and seeing what is in the larger world outside that helps your minds to grow.

The same is true of all your life. It is a poor thing as long as it is all within your own skin. It is not really worth keeping. There was once a man who excused himself for a piece of cowardice when he might have been brave by saying, "I would rather be a coward for half an hour than a dead man all the rest of my life." But the brave part of him was actually dead for the rest of his life, unless something changed him. So when you tell a lie to save yourself from pain, the truthful part of you dies. It is not worth while going on as a coward, a liar, a cheat, a mean, selfish clod.

I want you to notice that Jesus does not say that *all* ways of losing life bring it to us in greater fullness. He says, "Whoever will lose his life *for My sake*." Some people have tried to lose some of their life for their own sake, and that is quite a different thing. It is of no use flogging yourself to make yourself happier. The pain that brings the greater joy is that which you willingly undergo for some one higher than yourself, and Jesus

is the highest of all. What He wants us to do is always the best ; it is what will work out God's beautiful and holy will. That was what Jesus was always doing Himself, no matter how hard it was or how much it hurt at the time. He gave His own life, you know. Everything that is true or right or loving is really for His sake.

Don't you believe that giving up is best ? Think of the most selfish person you know, and then think of the one who is most unselfish. The one always wants to save his skin, his money, his comfort, and to get his own way. Is he the strongest, the wisest, or even the most happy ? The other takes trouble, spends his money and himself for the general good ; for what he believes to be God's beautiful will. Is he—only it is very often she—miserable and wretched ? Not at all. Even in this rough-and-tumble world we can see the larger and more beautiful life growing inside the one who lets self go.

But I agree it is often painful at first to give up our own way, our own pleasure, our own things, and especially our own life. That is because we are still like those seeds under the earth. We have not yet got out of the swelling and skin-splitting stage, nor come into God's full, free air and sunshine,

This earth life seems all that there is, but really there is an unseen world, larger and more spacious than this, to which just now we are mostly blind and deaf. When God calls us into that higher life, He will give us bodies of a more beautiful kind to use in His service, and we shall be more like Him.

XXI

THE WINDMILL AND THE JAR

“What doth it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?”—MARK viii. 36.

A MAN was pushing along the street a barrow, on which a number of gay paper windmills were whirling merrily round and making a brave show. He was calling something as he went. What it was, a little boy who was watching those fine windmills and, wishing very much to have one, could not at first distinguish. When he did hear, he could hardly believe his ears. He ran into the house. “Mother,” he said, “here is a man with beautiful windmills, and he says he will give one away just for an old jam jar. Can he really mean it?” “You can take a jar from the cupboard and try,” said his mother. So out he went, and came back rejoicing in this wonderful thing, that a man could take a useless old jar and give in exchange a glorious thing of colour that would spin round its

two wheels in opposite directions as if it were alive, if held properly in the wind.

The man also went on his way, glad to have got something that would help him in the business world to get food, clothing and house in exchange for something that was of no use to him at all.

That is the right kind of exchange. It did good to both parties. The man's body would be fed a little better for it, and the little boy's heart was gladder, because he could enjoy the colour and motion. It was the "fair exchange which is no robbery," though perhaps it was hard for each one to understand why the other should want what he himself had so readily given away. That is what all real business might be, if people used God's earth properly, and I hope you will make your business, when you grow up, something that will really help other people as much as it does you.

But some other exchanges are not like that. They leave one side very poor, when all is said and done. You remember the story of Aladdin and his lamp. It seemed to Aladdin's wife a wonderful thing when the pedlar, who was really the wicked magician, came offering new lamps for old, and she was in a great hurry to exchange that old thing in

the garret for a beautiful shiny new one. When Aladdin told her she had given a lamp that could give them everything they wanted for one that would only burn oil, she felt very different about it! And when they found that it was their enemy who could use it to destroy them, it was worse still. For my part, I think Aladdin had been wrong not to tell his wife all about it beforehand.

Of course, that is only a fairy tale, you say. Well, the right kind of fairy tale has a great deal of truth in it, whether the outside things happened or not. There are plenty of people to-day who are giving away the one thing which makes all other things of value, and they do not seem to know it. "What good can it do a man," asks Jesus, "to gain the whole world, all the money, all the houses, everything that makes up the world, if he gives away in exchange his own life?"

I have already told you, in our last talk, that the word "life" means more than the life of the body. It means the "soul," the life that uses the body. Let us take some of the ways in which it uses the body, so that we may understand better what Jesus meant.

One of the powers of this "life" or

"soul" is sight. For that we use our eyes, and often they serve us very well, but at the best they cannot see very far. The people called astronomers, for instance, cannot depend on their own eyes alone; they must have telescopes with which to look at the moon, or the planets, or the stars. Now it happens that at the present time these astronomers would like very much to be able to see what is really going on in the Planet Mars. Some of them think that they have discovered a system of canals, which may mean that there are people there, who may or may not look like us, but must think and work in much the same way. Others will not agree that the telescopes have really shown these things. What they need is an instrument that would magnify Mars as we see it many more times, but that is not likely to happen just yet.

Now suppose some one came to one of these astronomers and said, "I will give you a telescope that will show you clearly all that is happening on Mars, if you will make an exchange with something I want from you." That astronomer would be eager, and would say, "What is it?" Then the man with the telescope would say, "I want to take away your power of seeing." Do you think

that the bargain would be struck? Of course, the finest telescope that could ever be is of no use at all if the power of seeing be gone. That is one of the powers of "life" or "soul."

In the same way it would be useless to buy a splendid organ at the cost of your hearing, or the most delightful scents at the cost of your smelling. You can sit down and think of a great many things like that, for life has many powers.

Yet, as I have said, many people are actually giving away their powers of life for the things that can only be used by those powers. Some of them, I am sorry to say, do not seem able to help it. I have known a man and woman myself, who lived in a tiny room all day, making matchboxes as hard as they could ply their fingers, and all they could get by that was just enough money to pay for the little room and to buy just enough food to keep them able to go on making the matchboxes. If they stopped to go out and see what kind of a world it was outside, or to have some pleasant talk with their neighbours, or to do anything that seems really like living, then even the little food they got would stop too, and they would soon come to an end. I am glad to say that

we are all getting to understand that Jesus wants us to use our brains and hearts to find the right way of helping all such people to have more food, more room, and more time in which they really can live.

But the strange thing is that people who have plenty of money for food and clothing, and those things that must be worked for first, go on working to get more money to get more things, and never think of using the things themselves. It is something like going round and round and never getting any farther. Many of them lose their power of being glad ; many others lose the power of seeing the beauty in the flowers and all the lovely things there are in God's world. Many others lose their power of loving, and that is the worst of all. What is the use of money to one who cannot be bright and happy, cannot see beauty in anything, cannot love any one ?

In case you should become like that, I should like you to take great notice of this thing that Jesus said. For these people do not observe that their life is going. It all happens so gradually. And the worst of it is, that when they have exchanged their health, their happiness and their life-powers generally for money, they cannot change

back again. There is no shop where they sell happiness, or health, or any of these things. If you have worn out your eyes in getting money, no doctor can do more than tell you how to make it a little longer before they go altogether. If you have made your heart hard by grabbing all the things you want for yourself, none of those things will give you back the tender heart that felt with another's joy or was sad at another's sorrow.

There is only one way of getting life, and all the powers of life. It comes from God. God can give us back what the Bible calls "hearts of flesh" for the stony things they have become, and He will when any one really wants it. But the pity is that you may not even want it if you give your life away for money, or the wrong kind of pleasure, or pride, or any of these things. So the best thing is to listen to what Jesus says now, and go the way He tells us, so that we may have this life given us by God. Then all the things that we get we can use properly, and get the most out of them.

Remember, it is not the man who has most who is most alive, but the one who can do most, can think best, can feel most strongly and truly.

XXII

THE WASP AND THE SPIDER

“ If ye abide in My word . . . ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”—JOHN viii. 31.

IN the corner of the porch of a country house in which I was once staying there was a large spider's web. My attention was attracted to it by a buzzing that seemed louder than an ordinary fly would have made, and on looking closer, I saw that a wasp had blundered into the web, and was trying to break away. When I first looked, I thought he would manage it easily, for his wings were only caught by one or two threads. But the spider was at home, and on the alert. She did not want her beautiful web broken up by this clumsy visitor, and besides, if she could secure him, it would be a welcome addition to her larder.

If it had been only a fly, I expect the spider would have run along her ladders straight to it, and killed it at once. But the

wasp was not only bigger than herself, but had a terrible sting at the end of its body, which would have accounted for the spider very quickly, if the wasp could get in only one blow.

It was a great fight. The wasp plunged and did its best to whirl round, while its lithe body quivered with eagerness to sting something or somebody. But the spider kept a safe distance; she travelled round and round the wasp, spinning her thread all the time, and drawing it across whenever she got a chance so that it entangled the wings a little more. At last these were securely fastened. Then she wound round and round the body, downwards towards the sting, until the wasp was lashed up quite securely, without any power of movement at all.

A spider's thread is a soft, silky thing by itself, quite easily broken. But when it is wound round and round sufficiently, there is scarcely anything it will not tie up. If you have read *Gulliver's Travels*, you will recollect how Gulliver was held down to the ground by the thousands of little slender threads which the Lilliputians had fastened over him while he was asleep.

It is in something the same way that we get tangled up by lies, by falsehoods of all kinds,

until we are quite unable to live in anything like true freedom. A single lie by itself is comparatively harmless, but it is astonishing what it can do when it is repeated. It goes from mouth to mouth, until it seems absurd not to believe what everybody says. Sometimes this hinders people very much from doing things that would be most helpful.

A friend of mine, who is a shipwright, told me that at one time there was no work in the district where he lived, among the docks. There was a great dispute between the men and the shipowners, and nothing could be done until it was settled. But if no work is done, no pay comes in to buy food and other things, and a great number of the people were starving. My friend noticed some fungus, as it is called, growing on the sides of the docks ; the same kind of thing as mushrooms and toadstools. He was a man who was fond of reading and who noticed things, and he believed that these things were really good to eat. But everybody else said they were poisonous, and would have nothing to do with them. Even the man's wife, when he took them home, was sure he would be poisoned. They smelt so nice, though, when she cooked them, that she said she would have some and die with him ! But this

little bit of truth he had gathered had made him free to eat good food, and save himself and his wife from starving, for they did not die, but got on well through that terrible time.

Of course many lies are much more harmful than that, and the worst kind are those that have a good deal of truth in them, only twisted about a good deal. It really is the truth that has the power, and the lie part turns the power to do harm. Jesus found that the Pharisees and scribes had taken a good many things that were right and true to begin with, but had missed the real meaning, and made them hurtful. For instance, the Sabbath Day was given to them so that people might have a good rest one day in the week, and an opportunity of worshipping God and thinking of the best things ; it was to make a break in their lives, so that it should not be hard work and money-getting all the time. But they kept on saying to people, " It is wrong to do this," and " It is wrong to do that," until at last, when Jesus healed a man who had been lying helpless for thirty-eight years, one Sabbath, they lifted their hands in horror, and said He was a very wicked man.

Then there are the false things we get to

believe about God. It is quite true that no one can do anything against His will without getting hurt. That is because everything that is good for us is His will ; He is Love. So of course when we do the other things that are not good for us we get hurt. Everything that is truly His commandment is for our good, but people who are greedy, selfish, or spiteful, do not understand that. So when they do the wrong thing, and the disease or the pain or other mischief happens, they say that God sent it. That is one of the half-truths. It is true that God has so ordered things that truth, justice and love make us full of life, so lies and injustice and hate must mean death in many ways. But we bring the evil consequences on ourselves, and God is always wanting us to go His way so that we can be saved from them.

It is one of the dreadful consequences of our being proud, selfish, spiteful, jealous and all the other evil things, that it is very difficult for us always to know what is the truth when we see it or hear it. Even the eyes and ears of our bodies are often deceived, and we think we are telling correctly what we have seen and heard, when some one else, who has seen and heard the same thing, comes along and tells quite a different story.

Of course, we always begin by thinking that the other people are telling lies, but they think the same thing of us, until we are wise enough to understand that we need training to see properly, and to notice things properly.

When most boys and girls begin to use their paints, they begin to paint all the shadows black. But if they have a good teacher, they are trained to use their eyes until they can see all kinds of colours in the shadows. It is the same with our ears. Once, when I was teaching a class, I told a boy not to fidget. He got quite angry, and said I had called him an idiot. It was not until long afterwards that I discovered that he pronounced it "idjit" himself, and thought that that was what I had said.

So Jesus not only tells us that we need to know the truth, and that when we do, it will make us free of all these lies and mistakes, so that we can think and act with freedom, but He tells us how we can become able to know it. He says, "If ye abide in My word, ye shall know the truth."

Those who have got wrong need to be disciplined. In order to get your limbs to do things rightly and easily, you must be trained, and you must practise hard. If you do not have some one who knows to train you,

you will only get more accustomed to do things in the wrong way, and if you do not practise what you are told, no amount of telling will make you able to do it rightly.

The great thing is to choose the one who really can train us. How do we know that Jesus is after all the right One to make us know the truth? There are many advertisements in the papers claiming that men can cure all sorts of diseases, but unfortunately a great many people let them have their money and do not get cured after all. Yes, but if you knew some one who had been cured by a doctor, and then found out that that same doctor had helped a great many other people, you would go to him with confidence, would you not? Well, many of us have known others who have tried doing what Jesus tells them, and if they have been thorough in it, they have found that they have begun to see more clearly and to understand God better. We have ourselves then begun to try, and found the same thing. All through the hundreds of years it has been the same. Never mind the people who say so many different things about Him. Try it for yourself.

Begin with those things that you can see are true, and *practise them in yourselves.*

Then you become His disciples, and your power of seeing the truth in the other things He said will grow, and you will become free of many evil ways.

XXIII

DOORS AND WINDOWS

"I am the Door : by Me if any Man enter in, he shall go in and go out, and find pasture."—JOHN x. 9.

A VERY long time ago there was a very wise Chinese. Some of the things he said were so wise that we have to think a great deal about them before we understand what they mean. I will not trouble you with those, but here is one of his sayings that I think will be helpful. "Doors and windows," he said, "are useful by being cut out."

Perhaps you do not see quite what that means all at once. You think of a door as something you can bolt and bar to keep thieves and other undesirable people out from your house, and of windows as things you can shut up to prevent the wind from blowing papers and other light articles about in the room.

But if that were so, it would save trouble to build the walls of the house without any

openings at all. The solid brick and mortar would keep out burglars better than wooden doors. The great trouble would be that if you were outside when you finished the house, you would not be able to get in, and if you happened to be inside, some one would have to make a big hole with a crow-bar to let you out !

It is much the same with windows. If you only wanted to shut out the draught and to keep yourself warm, the best plan would be not to have any. I have seen the remains of some very ancient houses high up on a mountain which were in shape like great beehives. The people who lived there, perhaps thousands of years ago, used to get in at the top, and then pull a big stone across the opening. The houses were sunk in hollows, and there were no windows, so there they would lie safe and snug, and their enemies would hardly notice anything, unless they knew just where to look. Even then they could only get in by pulling the big beehive houses to pieces, which would be dangerous while there were men with spears inside.

Even to-day, the Esquimaux in the far cold North make their houses of great blocks of frozen snow in much the same way, and never think of windows. For six months of the

year they would be of no use, and in the other six months when the sun is shining they are outside most of the time, and when they want to sleep it is better to be in the dark.

Now, you and I are rather like people who have built themselves into their own houses. We are shut up in our own selves, that is, but God is outside. We need windows for His light to shine into us, and a door, so that we can get out of ourselves and go to Him.

Sometimes other people can be like windows to us. That is, they let a good deal of God's light into our souls, and help us to see better what we are doing. About five hundred years before Jesus came, a very great teacher came to India. His name was Gautama, but he is generally called the Buddha. Many of the things he told us about ourselves and the things we ought to do are almost exactly the same as Jesus has taught us, and it is very helpful even now to read what Gautama said. But he thought that it was useless to try to tell us anything about God. So he seems to me rather like the old windows that people used before glass was cheap enough for every one to have. They were made of oiled paper or linen, which let in light enough for folk to see *inside the house*, but shut out the view of everything outside.

openings at all. The solid brick and mortar would keep out burglars better than wooden doors. The great trouble would be that if you were outside when you finished the house, you would not be able to get in, and if you happened to be inside, some one would have to make a big hole with a crow-bar to let you out !

It is much the same with windows. If you only wanted to shut out the draught and to keep yourself warm, the best plan would be not to have any. I have seen the remains of some very ancient houses high up on a mountain which were in shape like great beehives. The people who lived there, perhaps thousands of years ago, used to get in at the top, and then pull a big stone across the opening. The houses were sunk in hollows, and there were no windows, so there they would lie safe and snug, and their enemies would hardly notice anything, unless they knew just where to look. Even then they could only get in by pulling the big beehive houses to pieces, which would be dangerous while there were men with spears inside.

Even to-day, the Esquimaux in the far cold North make their houses of great blocks of frozen snow in much the same way, and never think of windows. For six months of the

year they would be of no use, and in the other six months when the sun is shining they are outside most of the time, and when they want to sleep it is better to be in the dark.

Now, you and I are rather like people who have built themselves into their own houses. We are shut up in our own selves, that is, but God is outside. We need windows for His light to shine into us, and a door, so that we can get out of ourselves and go to Him.

Sometimes other people can be like windows to us. That is, they let a good deal of God's light into our souls, and help us to see better what we are doing. About five hundred years before Jesus came, a very great teacher came to India. His name was Gautama, but he is generally called the Buddha. Many of the things he told us about ourselves and the things we ought to do are almost exactly the same as Jesus has taught us, and it is very helpful even now to read what Gautama said. But he thought that it was useless to try to tell us anything about God. So he seems to me rather like the old windows that people used before glass was cheap enough for every one to have. They were made of oiled paper or linen, which let in light enough for folk to see *inside the house*, but shut out the view of everything outside.

Then there were the prophets who spoke to the Jews. These did tell many things about God ; how great and holy He is, and how all selfishness and sin is an offence against Him. But, as is said at the beginning of the Epistle to the Hebrews, God spake by the prophets in parts, and in "differently fashioned" ways. They remind me of those beautiful coloured windows that we see sometimes in great churches and cathedrals. They not only let in the light, but are splendid in themselves. All the same, when we look at them we see, not what is outside, but only the window. So we think what a magnificent man Isaiah was, for instance, and we feel that he tells us a great deal of what we ought to be and do, and a great deal *about* God ; but when we look at him, we do not see God Himself.

But when we look at Jesus, we see *through Him*, as it were, to God. He not only speaks God's words to us, but He *is* what God is. All His love and tenderness, all His rightness, all His trueness, all His giving of Himself to us and for us, are just the same as God's. As St. Paul put it, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself." So Jesus is like a clear glass window from ourselves into the heart of God. Because

there was nothing in Him unlike God, nothing to block the way, however beautiful it might be, like the stained window; we see God "in the face of Jesus."

But we need something more than a window. We should still be shut up in ourselves if that were all. We need a door, by which we can go in and out. Jesus says He is that door. Through Him we can get out of ourselves, and go to God.

When the great Abraham Lincoln was President of the United States, it often happened that people would want to go to him to get pardon for some one who had done wrong and been sentenced to death, for as President he had the power to let them off. Once one of his friends was going to call on him, and found outside the door a poor woman who was crying in great distress. She wanted to see the President at once, because her son was to be shot next day. But the doorkeepers would not let her in to disturb Mr. Lincoln. The friend heard her story, and said, "When I go in, you slip in front of me, and I will see that you get to the President." Well, the doorkeepers made a great fuss, but they could not turn the woman out without being very rude to the President's friend, so they came to the room

where Mr. Lincoln was. When he heard her story and saw how distressed she was, he signed a paper setting her son free. So that man was something like a living door for that poor mother, was he not ?

In the same way, many people have acted like those doorkeepers. They have actually kept us from God by saying things about His being too grand for us to go to Him, or too great to be troubled by our prayers. And there are many things in our own selves that have barred the way. Jesus came, and said, "Come with Me ; take My hand ; do what I tell you ; trust in Me and walk the way I walk." Those who do this not only begin to *know* something of what God is like, but they really are taken out of themselves to God.

St. Paul said that Jesus "broke down the barrier." We had built it up by our wrong-doing and wrong thinking, and it cost Jesus a good deal to break it down. So many people did not want it done, or they insisted that He was doing it the wrong way and spoiling their nice snug little house in which they were quite contented with themselves. So they persecuted Him, and at last killed Him, as you know. He knew they would, but He loved us so that He kept on till

the work was finished ; till they had crucified Him, and He had come back to show the disciples that He was alive again and was going to be alive for evermore.

I think He is trying to break down the selfishness and naughtiness in you until there you will see Him as the Door you can go through to get to God. He says, " Come out of your little selfishness ; come out of your pride ; leave yourself and live in Me. Do not keep on thinking of what you want ; learn the splendid things I want ; do what you see Me do, and I will bring you right home to the Father, and you shall live no longer in your own narrow little hut, but in one of the mansions in the heaven where God is and where His beautiful will is always done." That is where those of us who have heard His voice want to be ; that is why, though we often stumble, we go on trying to follow Him, knowing that He is always by to set us on our feet and care for us until the journey is done and we find God Himself.

XXIV

FOR JESUS' SAKE

"That whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My Name, He may give it you."—JOHN xv. 16.

You often hear the prayers in church ended with the words, "for Jesus' sake," and very likely that is how you finish your own. Some time ago I was asked to explain this for a little boy, and perhaps a talk about it with you would be helpful. It is important to know why we use the words when we are praying to God, because we might easily mean the wrong thing.

Some of you will have heard the story of King Edward the Third, and what he did with the citizens of Calais. It will help us to see something both of what we ought to mean and what we ought not.

In those days the English kings thought that a good deal of France belonged to them, but the people who lived there were not so sure about it. The town of Calais had

revolted, and King Edward besieged it to bring it into subjection again. But the men of Calais fought very bravely, and held out for a long time, which made Edward very angry with them. At last all their food was gone, and they had to send a herald with a flag of truce to know what conditions they might have if they surrendered. Edward replied that twelve of their best citizens must come out to him with ropes round their necks ready to be hanged, and he would pardon the rest. This was hard, but there was nothing else for them to do, so the brave men came out as the King had demanded, and they would have been hanged, for Edward was still in a bad temper. But Queen Philippa was very sorry for these men, for after all they had only done their best for their own town, so she begged the King to spare their lives. Philippa had been a good wife to Edward, and at last, though he did not like it, he gave way, and pardoned them, *for her sake*.

Now, you must not think that God is like King Edward in his wanting to kill those men. God loves us Himself, and does not want any one to die. It was because He loved us that He sent His Son to save us, and in all that Jesus was and did we can see God and His love. This is what Jesus Himself

told us. But just as it was not anything that the men had done themselves, or because of what they were, that they were set free, so we have to remember that we cannot go to God and remind Him that we are so good, or so wise, or so strong, that of course He must do what we want.

By ourselves you and I are of very little account, though we often think ourselves very important. I suppose we are important to ourselves, but that does not go very far. It did not seem to make much difference to the world when we came into it, and the world will manage to get along when we have left it. It manages to get along when the greatest men have left it, so it can do without us. It is well to remember this sometimes, when we are inclined to get conceited. And if the world can carry out its business without us, you may be sure that God does not need us for anything we can do. To understand why God has taken trouble about us, we have to learn very thoroughly that it is not because of anything in ourselves.

Once a man was going down one of the streets of London, looking very big and important, and swaggering along as if everything belonged to him. Another man, who always liked a bit of fun, could not stand all

these airs and graces, so he went up very quietly to the swaggering man and said to him, "Pray, sir, *are you anybody in particular?*" The man was so taken aback that he could not find anything to say, and went along the rest of his way in quite a different fashion. What could you say if you were asked the same question?

It is not easy to learn this lesson, because we only know things and other people through our own eyes and our own minds, so that everything seems to circle round us. We do not know what is going on where we do not happen to be, so we forget that it really is going on all the while. A little boy was asked what happened ten years before, and answered, "Nothing happened then; I was only born seven years ago." But you see, the very fact that we only know what we ourselves see and hear shows how little, not how big we are.

No, it is not because of what we are that God has taken all the trouble about us, and that we can go and ask Him for all the best things. It is because of what He is Himself; because He *loves us*. That is the only importance we have, and you see that that only comes to us from God's love.

You know that often a little baby comes to

a house. Now a baby in itself is a useless thing. It cannot talk or tell us anything. It cannot do anything for itself, but needs to have everything done for it. Sometimes in the night it quite spoils its mother's rest, and its father's too. It costs money to feed and clothe, and looking after it makes a great deal of trouble. Yet, if the house were to catch fire, mother and father would think of that baby first of all, and perhaps you would too. And without anything quite so dreadful happening, mothers generally are quite glad to take all the trouble that the baby makes. Why? Just because of the love that is in themselves.

Now God put that love in them; it all comes from Him. "We love, because He first loved us," said the Apostle John. And it is altogether because of His love that He saves us from our sins that have brought so much misery on us and on the world, and is working to bring us back to Himself, made free from them all.

You are thinking, perhaps, "Then why should we pray for anybody else's sake? Why not simply go to God and ask Him because He loves us?" Well, the reason for that is that it is altogether through Jesus that we know God's love. No one has seen

God, because our naughtiness has taken away from us the power of seeing Him. Only the pure in heart can see God, and we are very far from being pure in heart. We are selfish, and there are many other things the matter with us. So Jesus came as a Man whom we could see, and talked to His disciples in their own language, and a good deal of what He said has been put into the language that you and I understand. If we try to think of God apart from Jesus we get confused, and sometimes He seems to us so great and altogether beyond our power of thinking, that He seems very terrible. So when we pray, "for Jesus' sake," we remember that it is not because we can demand things from God on our own account, but because of His love which we have known in Jesus, that He gives them to us. Especially when we remember that Jesus was willing to die on the Cross, because He loved us so much, we are bold to pray "for Jesus' sake."

There is one other thing I should like to say to you about this. Jesus did not use these words Himself. We have grown to use them ourselves since. What Jesus said was that if we asked anything *in His Name*, it would be given us. That is some-

thing like the other, but it means a little more. You are often inclined to ask for just what you happen to want at the time, but you do not know whether it is really good or not. A little girl I knew was once heard saying, as she sat on the stairs looking at the rain out of doors, "Oh, Father in Heaven, do make it a fine day!" Well, it did not become a fine day, and I expect if God had made the weather change just to please her for a little while, it would have done more harm somewhere else. Besides, it was much better for her to learn to be happy whatever the weather was than to be pleased by something outside herself for a short time.

But when we get to know what Jesus wants, we know that we are really asking for something good. To ask in His Name means that. When an ambassador goes to another country, he does a lot of speaking, but it is not what he thinks and feels like himself; it is what his country has to say to the other that he says. It is a splendid thing to pray in the Name of Jesus, because it sifts out all the silly and the selfish things that we might ask of God. What we have to do is to learn to ask Him for the really best things, because He is waiting to give these to us; the great difficulty is that we do not want

them, until we have learnt to pray truly in Jesus' Name, or for His sake. It may seem hard at first that you do not get just what you want, but as you learn to pray the other way you will find that it would have been harder still if you had the things you asked for in your own name only. Jesus wants to make you yourself to know and want the things that make you altogether alive, and that is the best of all.

BV 4315 P28	Reason What Jesus said 454775
JUN 20 '20 JUL 31 '20	E. A. Olson 7834 Phillips
AUG 2 '20 AUG 14 '20	E. A. Olson 7834 Phillips
AUG 14 '20 OCT 21 '20	E. A. Olson 7834 Phillips
	2- 9877

2- 9877

454775

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



56 504 184